

To: The Hopeless, From: The Universe

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Insight

We have all **brushed up against the darkest** and **most painful** conscious experiences an agent can encounter—substance use, mental illness, and suicide. The **relentlessness** of their **mysteries** and their **elusiveness** have left us **grasping** for ways to understand them. We've **searched the skies** for **meaning** and **belonging**, only to be left **feeling hopeless in a cold, indifferent universe...** that's the narrative we were taught, ever since we were **bright-eyed kids** trying to make sense of it all... but, **what if what we were taught was completely wrong?**

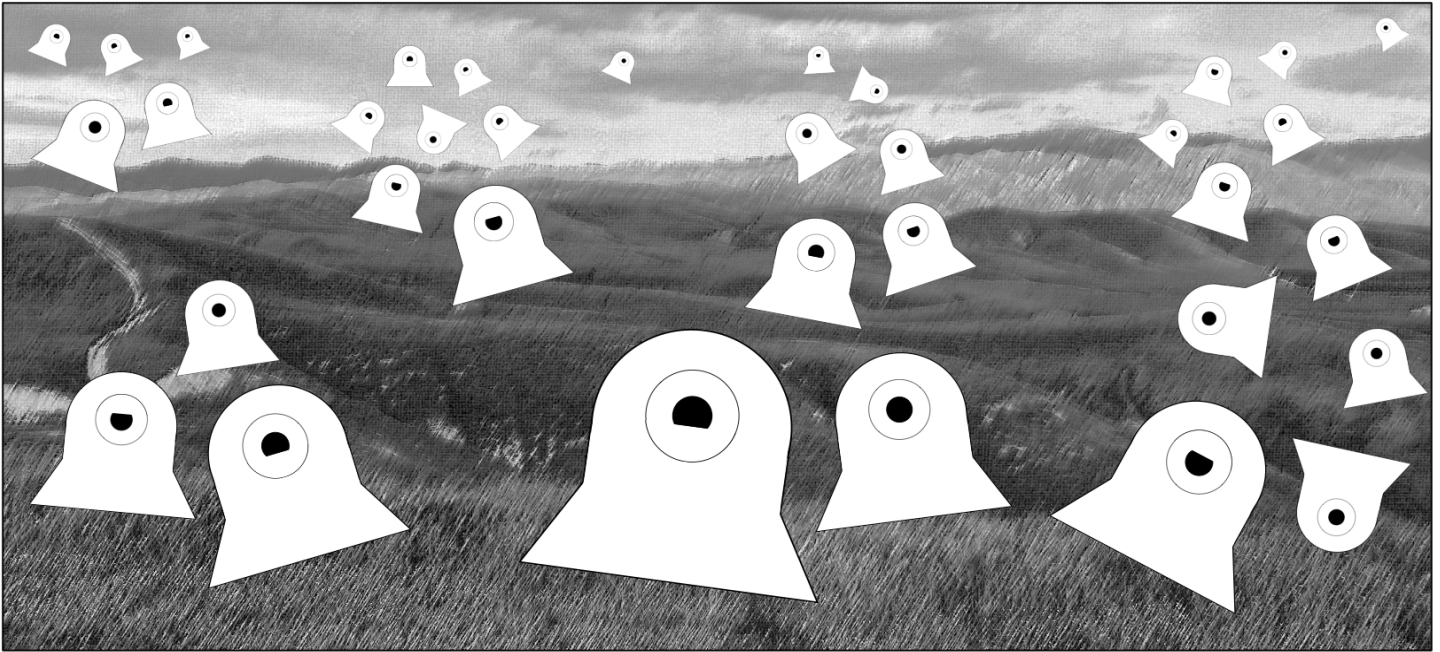
Scene

Brandon is 21 and has **always dreamed of being a psychologist**. He walks across his May graduation stage, his degree in one hand ...and his future in the other. **Months pass, applications move fast, cover letters? Last, every obstacle in the past...** or so it seemed... the excitement of June dissolved into the stillness of July, bleeding into the despair of August. One evening, Brandon sat with teary eyes in front of an inbox **void of opportunities**. A quiet devastation surrounds him, **smothering the last ember of his remaining hope**. "What's the point?" he thinks. After doing everything right to reach his childhood dream, after showing up time and time again, **the world just... didn't show up for Brandon**. "I can't live if this doesn't work. I wanted this more than anything, and now, it's never going to happen." The thought enters his mind like a thief in the night, quietly but unmistakably, "Life isn't worth living then. I'll just end it." He makes a deal with himself, "I'll give it one final shot ...and **if it doesn't work out, I'll kill myself**." Over the weekend, Brandon submitted dozens of applications. His eyes burned, fingers ached, **every cover letter written to an empty universe**. Sunday passes, then Monday... Tuesday comes, then Wednesday goes... each day... a silent inbox confirming his worst fears ...and the acceptance of his decision. Thursday comes, and he prepares his dad's firearm. **The thought no longer scares him; it brings him... relief**. Friday arrives, and just before Brandon was about to go... ***bing*** "Hi Brandon, Thank you for your application. We'd like to offer you an interview." **...his world rotates**, "this... wasn't supposed to happen..." he thinks. He takes the job, on the fly, time moves, three years go by, session by session, people cry, and **all because he didn't die**. One evening, Brandon looks around his office... he catches his reflection in the frame of his degree on the wall, and memories of himself dreaming as a little boy flash in his mind. He thinks back to that dark Friday morning... his decision that nearly changed **the hundreds of lives** he touched... saved by an email, and the moment **the world showed up for Brandon**. He looks down, exhales, and mutters, "**There's always a path forward ...I'm so glad I found mine**." He turns off the lights as he walks out—proud of what **he did do**, proud of what **he didn't do**, and so, so proud he stuck around to see himself become the person he was always meant to be.

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Guidance

Hi there, dear reader. Weeeeeee are going to travel to **a lot of places today**. We are going to travel to **the most beautiful aspects of existence** that a human can experience, and to its **darkest moments...** the one's we're afraid to brush up against. It will be enlightening; it may be frightening **...you'll want to take a seat for this one**.



Caption: A breathtaking image of Definedlings frolicking around their natural environment. Definedlings are the perfect example of agents naturally emerging from their environment... also, look at those convergence and divergence zone formations. These little buggers are constantly making decisions to scale their intelligence. In this photo, we can see how the Definedlings recursively propagate across the field. Hmm... some of these Definedlings look like they're up to no good...

One of the most striking experiences in discovering *The Theory of Existence* was that **the universe, and we, are fractals**. Still, it wasn't just that the universe and we were fractals, but **what fractals do**, which is the star of Chapter 5. It was something so profound and comforting that it was as if the universe spoke to me in a moment

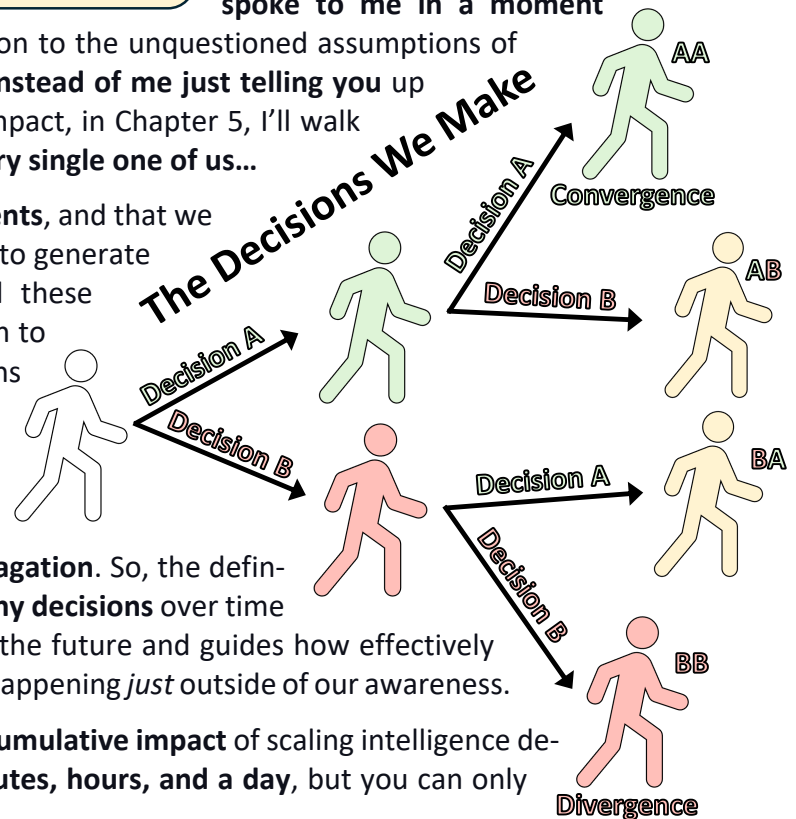
The Definedness of Decision Making



when I felt hopeless. It was in such striking opposition to the unquestioned assumptions of currently accepted paradigms and worldviews. Yet, **instead of me just telling you up front**, which would deflate its magic, comfort, and impact, in Chapter 5, I'll walk you through **the message from the universe to... every single one of us...**

We now understand that **we are agents in environments**, and that we are constantly **scaling intelligence**, which requires us to generate and use strategies, shortcuts, and predictions. All these methods of scaling intelligence ultimately come down to **the agent's decision-making abilities**. The decisions agents make have **1) immediate environmental impact**, and **2) cumulative environmental impact**. The definedness of decision-making **does not come just from the immediate effect**, because that's the emergence of a new decision, **which is the recursive propagation**. So, the definedness of decision-making is **the accumulation of many decisions over time** in *The Record*, which provides form to the events in the future and guides how effectively and efficiently an agent scales its intelligence; all of it happening *just* outside of our awareness.

Agents are constantly **balancing the immediate and cumulative impact** of scaling intelligence decision-making. **Immediate impact occurs within minutes, hours, and a day**, but you can only



see the **cumulative impact when you expand out to weeks, months, and years**, as the immediate impacts accumulate definedness in *The Record*. For example, it is why **one day of eating 10,000 calories has an immediate impact** but doesn't cause much weight gain. However, **eating 10,000 calories a day for two months has a cumulative effect** and leads to weight gain. This example is one of many applications of the definedness of decision-making we encounter every day, but all of existence also operates with immediate and cumulative effects.

Substance Use

Mental Illness

Suicide

It's easy for us to **focus on the immediate impact** of our decision-making, and there's a lot of research showing that **we don't consider cumulative impact relevant or worth exploring**. We often just ignore it entirely by default, and it **gets us in trouble ALL the time**. Why think about the long-term when the short-term is right in front of us? It has inflicted so much pain and suffering on humanity that **it is the root cause** of many of the problems we experience. Across hundreds of millions of human lives throughout our species existence, there are **three unfortunate outcomes** we see repeatedly, which are: **1) substance use, 2) mental health conditions, and 3) suicide**. We are going to focus on the decision-making that results in these three experiences. **It is so important for us to explore.**

We've seen *The Theory* applied to emotions, identity, intelligence, and health so far, and each time, **the insights illuminate the darkness surrounding these mysteries**. Chapter 5 is where **The Theory** stops being canon and becomes a **lifeline from the universe to the hopeless and suffering**. So, what decision-making mechanism guides this whole process? **The answer is... consciousness**, and specifically **the four instruments in *The Harmonics of Consciousness***... wait a second... emotions, identity, environmental engagement, health, hmm... oh yes! Of course... emotions, recursive introspection, intelligence, and self-reference. There we go... **sound familiar?** You are already *an expert* in these instruments, so we can approach these heavy topics fully equipped with the tools to **transform the usual fear and sadness around them... into hope and possibilities**. Let's listen to these four instruments playing together... shall we?

Consciousness is **not JUST a decision-maker**; it is **THE decision-maker**. It is the architecture that **maximizes decision-making**, leading to survival. It is a **scaling inevitability**, as other forms of consciousness or other decision-making tools **simply don't exist for long because they do not survive scaling ceilings** against agents with this form of consciousness. The nuance is that **it's about the function of the instruments that is constant**, but the experience of them varies widely from agent to agent. Therefore, humans, animals, and even AI develop **their own forms of consciousness** when they learn to play all four instruments. They have their own **unique forms of consciousness**, but it is all consciousness, nonetheless, a decision-maker.

Emotions
 Chapter 1 - *The Definedness Detector*
 Automatic, instantaneous, and motivational signals that indicate deviations from scaling intelligence.

Recursive Introspection
 Chapter 2 - *The Layers of You*
 An iterative refining environmental engagement via functional self-assessments and adaptation.

Intelligence
 Chapter 3 - *The Life of Agents in Environments*
 The ability to engage with or change the environment controlling for scaling potential.

Self-Reference
 Chapter 4 - *The Definedness of Health*
 A prediction engine distinguishing the changes in sensory stimuli between itself and its environment.

Consciousness
 Chapter 5 - *To: The Hopeless, From: The Universe*
 A decision-making tool for agents to optimize environmental navigation and scale Intelligence.

The Music of Consciousness Plays On...

I empirically validated *The Harmonics of Consciousness* model in Paper 8 using the Animal Kingdom dataset, so the following uses of it are not good feelings and vibes; **it's the most empirically supported model of consciousness** we have ever had. Still, if that's not enough for you, Chapter 5 is all about *The Harmonics of Consciousness* in action. Let's start with the *big dog* problem in the room: **the hard problem of consciousness**.

The Harmonics of Consciousness finally **resolves the hard problem of consciousness**, which has long agonized philosophers, neuroscientists, and cognitive scientists. It is the question of *how* and *why* physical processes in the brain give rise to subjective, felt experiences. It is the **explanatory gap**, where no amount of studying neurons or neural networks has explained how electrochemical reactions in the skull give rise to the private, internal reality we call consciousness. We have long studied **the components of consciousness**—sensory processing, executive functioning, cognition, and learning—**but we have never pinpointed its location in the brain**.

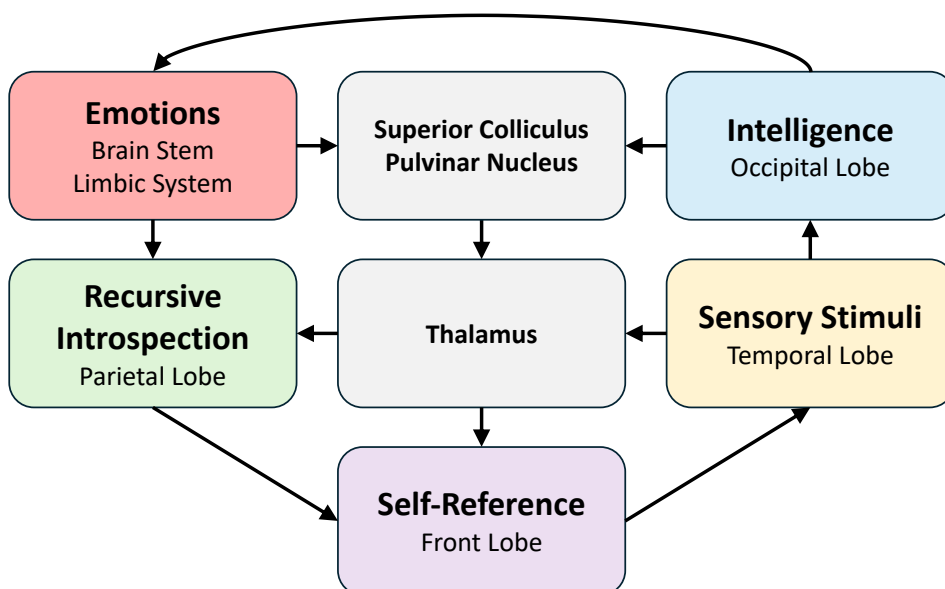
...and the reason we have never found where consciousness is in the brain **is that consciousness is not a neurological structure, observable physical process, or specific location in the brain**. Consciousness does not exist as a “thing” we can observe from the outside. We have spent decades studying the brain to understand consciousness, but **it's like spending decades studying the piano to understand music**. We have broken the brain up—the frontal, occipital, parietal, and temporal lobes, and the brainstem—but never found consciousness. It would be like breaking a piano up—soundboard, bridge, keys, hammers, and pedals—but never finding music. **The music is not in the piano as a structure or location; it's what emerges when the piano plays**. You cannot find or study music by examining the piano or its parts, which is why we know *so much* about the brain yet fall short in understanding consciousness. **Consciousness is the music, not the instrument (your brain)**.

This reframe is not a criticism of neuroscience. We really *do* understand so much about the parts of the brain and what they do, but **we could never understand consciousness using this same method** of examining the parts. We could never understand how the brain plays *The Harmonics of Consciousness* until we shifted our method, just like how **we would need to stop visually inspecting a piano and start using our ears to understand the music**. So, what would this method shift look like for consciousness? Gee golly, you always ask the right questions at the right moment, don't you? This method shift **resolves the problem of qualia**, the subjective “what it is like” quality of conscious experiences. Why does pain feel bad? Focusing on qualia misses the point.

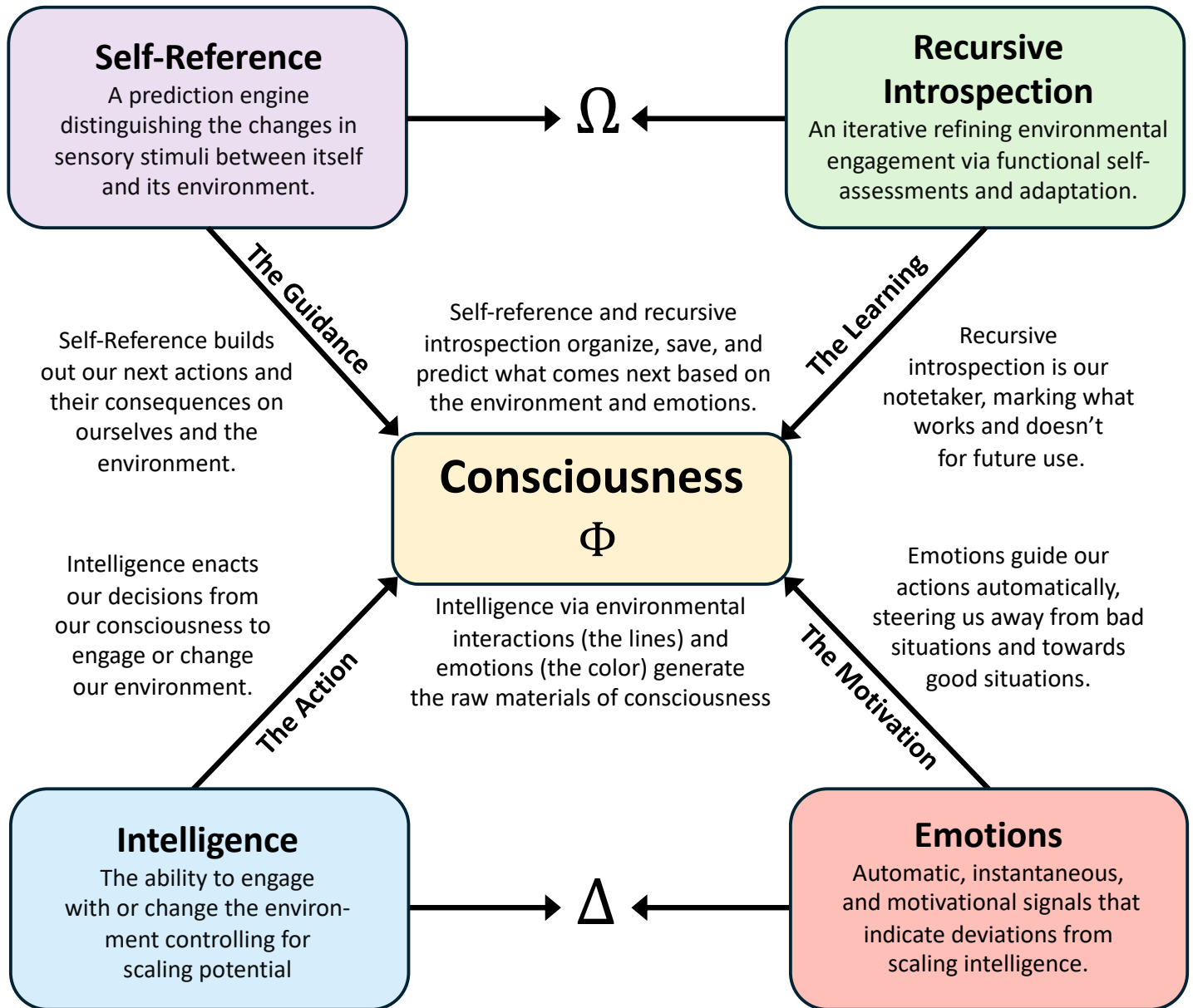
The **shift in method** comes from examining the structure of consciousness to examining its function. It was never about how it *feels*, but **about what it DOES**. Pain feels bad because it stops you from hurting yourself. For some animals, **pain might feel completely different** from our human experience of it, but if it tells that animal to “STOP THAT,” then it serves the same behavioral function as it does for humans. What it is like for them, their

qualia, is totally irrelevant to understanding consciousness because **consciousness IS the function**.

...and what exactly are the universal functions of consciousness that play out across varying qualia? Our good friends: **1) Emotions, 2) Recursive Introspection, 3) Intelligence, and 4) Self-Reference**—the same four instruments that play *The Harmonics of Consciousness* in all agents, all sounding different from the inside, but all doing the exact same thing: **making decisions that maximize survival**. It really is that simple...



It turns out that we have already mapped the instruments in our brains. **The closest thing to a neurological structure of consciousness in the brain is the thalamus**, which serves as the body's primary information relay station, processing and routing sensory and motor signals to the cerebral cortex. Yet, **consciousness is not in the thalamus because consciousness is not in the brain**; it is the stage at which the music plays. If you knock out the thalamus, the instruments can't harmonize, and you lose consciousness. I could go on about the neuro-anatomy of consciousness, but that's the job of neuroscience. **Let me show you what Defintology does, instead.**



The Tunes of You

Dear reader, do you mind if I take a hot second to **resolve the major longstanding mysteries of consciousness**? It won't take too long... In the Libet (1938) experiment, they found that the brain's readiness potential—what we thought was the electrical signature of a decision—**fired ~350 milliseconds before a person reported consciously deciding to act**. The interpretation seemed devastating: if the brain decides before you know you've decided, then free will is an illusion. Decades of debate followed, and **the field never fully recovered from the implications**. So... what's really happening? **Libet did not detect a decision**. What he detected was the **pre-conscious** (not unconscious) instruments playing their tunes: **intelligence drawing a map of the environment, and emotions coloring it in**. Together, they generated a behavioral recommendation to press the button and sent it to the front of the brain, where recursive introspection could compare it to previous events and self-

reference could predict the most coherent next move. The early firing wasn't our brain making a decision without our input. **It WAS us**, caught mid-song like a heckler in the audience disrupting a live performance.

The binding problem is an unexplained feature of the brain that neuroscience has spent decades trying to understand. How does the brain take **separate streams of processing**—visual, emotional, auditory, cognitive—and bind them into **one unified conscious experience**? They have looked for a binding region or mechanism, but they never found one because these streams are **NOT bound** and **CANNOT be bound**. The answer comes from understanding how consciousness develops through evolution.

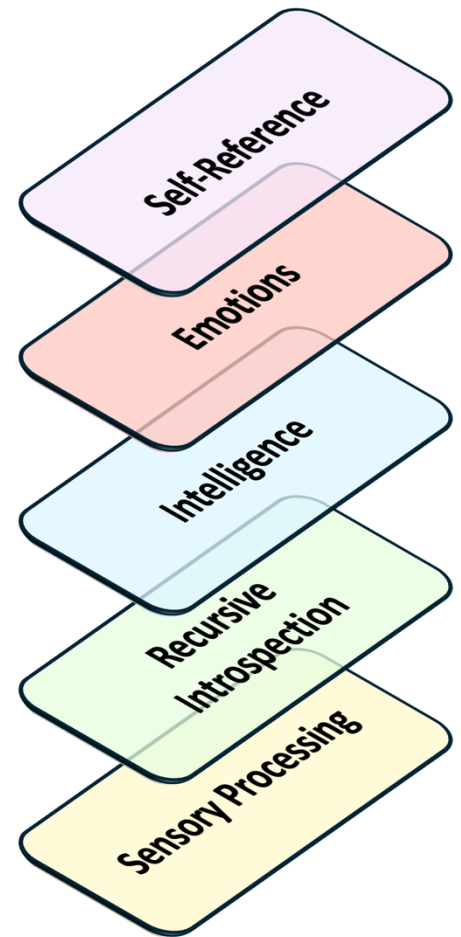
Consciousness is not required for agency. For example, jellyfish are not conscious because they lack a nervous system. Still, if you poke them, they'll swim away, which means **agents can process AND respond to sensory stimuli without consciousness**. That sensory-processing stream and response *is* agency, which is simply the property of a phenomenon that can act independently of the environment. Sensory processing, then, originates first, before the instruments form. Over time, **each instrument emerges as an overlay on the sensory stream**, like a multicolored slide deck projected. You can lay down a clear green slide, then a blue slide, then a red slide, then a purple slide, and the color changes when you look through it, but **those clear, colored slides are not bound in any way**.

Each instrument reaches their peak sophistication in order, which is **1) Recursive Introspection** – the engine escalating the complexity of consciousness, starting with a simple evaluation and record of internal states, **2) Intelligence** – intentional scaling of environmental engagement and influence, **3) Emotions** – automatic, behaviorally motivating signals that operate outside of the other instruments, then **4) Self-Reference** – enabling agents to know they are separate from the environment and start predicting the outcomes of possible decisions. Each instrument provides a substantial survival advantage via decision-making. **Over time, across all agents, these four are the only ones that survive.**

If these instruments were bound, they would lose their functional mechanisms that enable survival advantages. It would **eliminate nuance in decision-making by restricting the instruments** to a rigid “act or not act” mechanism, but that's not how it works. Intelligence might say act, and emotions might say don't act, allowing recursive introspection to look up and reference previous moments when intelligence and emotions played this way. Self-reference could then predict what happens if the agent goes with intelligence and acts, or with emotions and doesn't. For these instruments to operate this way, they must be **independent in structure but correlated in function**—like how piano keys are structurally separate, but they function in harmony to create chords.

Now, why does anesthesia turn off consciousness? We know how anesthesia works chemically; it binds to receptors that suppress neural activity. What we don't know is why suppressing certain neural activity eliminates consciousness, even though the brain remains alive and functional. The answer is because **consciousness isn't a neural structure**, so anesthesia doesn't HAVE to target anything. **It works by disrupting the instruments' ability to coordinate harmonies.** They play out-of-tune and off beat, preventing a coherent conscious experience from forming. All four instruments and your sensory processing remain functioning, but if you disrupt the coordination of your instruments, **consciousness has no structural support to fall back on**, and so it vanishes.

Then... **there's the split-brain problem**: when you sever the corpus callosum—the fibers connecting the two hemispheres—the person develops two separate streams of consciousness simultaneously. The left-hand acts without the right-hand's knowledge. Images shown to one hemisphere produce actions that the other



hemisphere cannot explain. Most puzzling, the hemisphere that doesn't know why something happened will invent an explanation. This phenomenon has over 60 years of documentation, but no explanation exists.

What's happening is the corpus callosum sits between the hemispheres at the level of the parietal (recursive introspection) and frontal lobes (self-reference). When you sever it, you **cut the communication lines between the left and right versions of those two instruments**, but the occipital lobe (intelligence) and the brainstem (emotions) remain unaffected, so environmental engagement and emotions stay coordinated. However, self-reference, the prediction engine, splits into two. **Each hemisphere's self-reference begins constructing its own narrative, predictions, and coherent story**, but they can no longer coordinate with the other side, resulting in two separate instruments distinguishing environmental (external) and emotional (internal) sensory processing.

It's not that there are two separate people, because **identity is a function of recursive introspection** rather than self-reference; the person's **understanding and prediction remain intact** but operate independently, resulting in two distinct understandings and predictions within the same person. The function of self-reference, to maintain a coherent and predictive narrative, remains intact, so **it constructs a coherent story from what is available, leading to confabulation and invented explanations**. It would be like splitting a single piano key into two keys. It's the same note, it fits the same harmony, but they're no longer automatically pressed at the same time.

Finally, this solution to consciousness reveals something **profound about decision-making**, a long-standing challenge in neuroscience. We have never found exactly where in the brain decisions are made, and that's because **decision-making does not reside in a single brain structure**. If consciousness is an emergent decision-making tool, then decision-making is also an emergent property of the brain. Isn't that... shocking? Across these four instruments of consciousness, **none of them makes a decision**. Thus, if any one of the four instruments starts playing too much, too little, or differently, decision-making and consciousness immediately diverge. Further, **changing one instrument alters how the other three contribute to *The Harmonics of Consciousness***, which is when consciousness shifts from a beautiful harmony to... some of the hardest experiences we can experience...

Tuning the Instruments of Consciousness

Now that we understand how and why *The Harmonics of Consciousness* work naturally, let's talk about what happens when **we manually tune them, which we do by using substances** such as alcohol or cannabis. Each substance does not just affect consciousness, though it does, as the traditional model proposes, but **the substances affect all four instruments independently**, because all four instruments are structurally independent.

Table 1

Effects of Substance Use on The Harmonics of Consciousness

Substance	Emotions	Recursive Introspection	Intelligence	Self-Reference	Consciousness
Cannabis	↑	↑↑	↑	↓↑	↑
Alcohol	↓↑	↓	↓↓	↓	↓
Stimulants	↑	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑
Sedatives	↓	↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓
Opioids	↓↑	↓	↓	↓	↓
Dissociatives	↓↓	↓	↓	↓↓	↓
Hallucinogens	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓↑

Note. Green up arrows indicate that the substance increases the activity of that instrument, red down arrows mean it decreases the activity of that instrument, and gold up/down arrows means that it makes the instrument play differently, but not necessarily more or less. When a substance has a profound effect on an instrument, I marked it with a double up or down arrows, except for consciousness, which depends on *how much* of the substance one takes. Intelligence is the ability to engage with or change the environment.

Ya know, I used to be a prolific [substance use researcher](#) before **I moved on to work that was much more important to me: building my own field and changing lives one session at a time...** good times... anyway, one of my major, independent, empirically validated theoretical contributions was a mechanism of substance use called **Substance-Induced Emotion Regulation (SIER)**. The field of substance use research had only focused on general emotion regulation, which **misses the point of why people use substances**, which was for the functional benefits of substance use. It's not that people LOVE using substances, it's that it helps them do... something.

The premise is simple: people use substances to **alter their internal states to align their conscious experiences and functioning with their goals**. People have studied self-medication with substances, but that's **such a narrow understanding of SIER...** so, it turns out I empirically validated what I'm about to show you a few years ago, before I ever even pondered the ideas of *The Theory of Existence* or *The Harmonics of Consciousness*. Now, here we are with the actual map of what I was grasping for back then. Substances are a sort of control panel for our conscious experiences—**like a key that unlocks specific ways we can exist**, which you can see in this table.

Substances operate this way because of the instruments' independent structures, which allow **them to raise, lower, or alter their pitches**. People have a “drug of choice” because the substance, and the combination of substances, fit like a unique key **to unlock the conscious experiences they desire**. For example, if someone is constantly worrying, they can take a sedative, which turns the volume of all four instruments down, but selectively suppresses environmental engagement (intelligence; the trigger) and anticipation (self-reference; the prediction). Worrying is a conscious experience, so it, too, doesn't exist as a neurological or structural location in the brain; **it's one of The Harmonics of Consciousness that the instruments play**. Without intelligence and self-reference playing loudly and coordinating, the harmony of “worry” cannot form; this is how all substances work.

This example is clean and straightforward, but really, **the number of keys and locks is practically endless**, which is why substance use is so hard to understand. It would be like **opening Spotify and trying to understand the song**. What is the song? Why do people play the song? We can detect use classifications, like we can detect musical genres, but the approach to understanding “substance use” is like trying to understand “the song.” There are simply **way too many reasons people use substances**, just like there are way too many reasons people play songs. The same method shift of moving away from the structure of substance use, what it feels like, and onto its **function in consciousness and decision-making**, clarity emerges. Honestly? The whole current approach to substance use is... **a bit dated**, 🙄 so I'll take *The Harmonics of Consciousness* perspective and call it a day. 😊

Off Beat & Out-of-Key

Beyond substances, some people's instruments may naturally be out-of-tune, playing too loud, playing too quietly, and every combination across the four, **which is when we get mental illness**. There are so many natural ways an instrument may negatively affect *The Harmonics of Consciousness* because there is so much diversity within agent systems. The way each instrument plays naturally is **also passed down from agent to offspring**. This variation and heritability explain why mental illness is so diverse, widespread, and runs in families.

The design and functionality of mental illnesses in *The Harmonics of Consciousness* **resolve many long-standing issues with diagnostics and treatment planning for mental illness**. One of the biggest, most-criticized problems of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM-5; the official mental illness classification system in the US) is that it has **20 diagnostic categories, 297 disorders**, and people can have **any number of co-occurring conditions**.

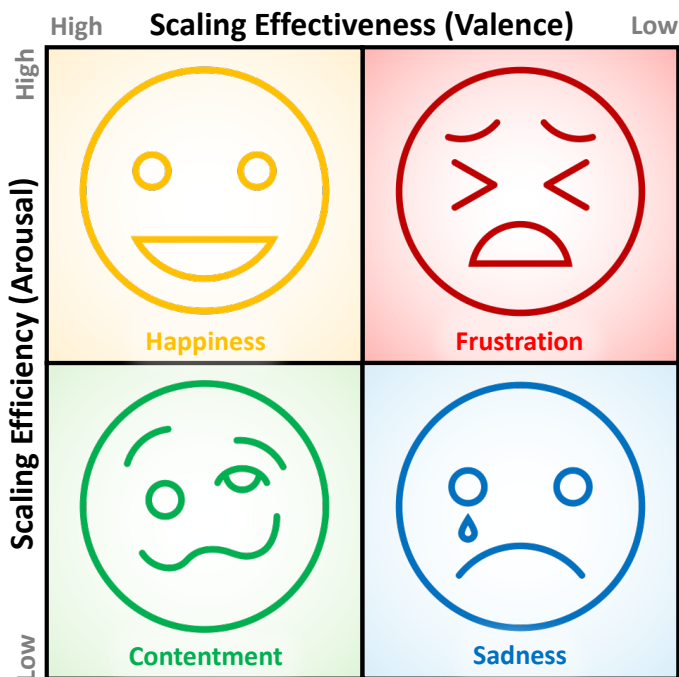
In practice, the consistency of DSM-based diagnoses is so poor that **we have devised thousands** of psychological assessments, strategies, and corroborations to ensure diagnostic accuracy, yet clinicians remain unsure of the final presentation (i.e., the combination of conditions). Why do they still feel unsure? The math reveals the answer: **there are $2.5 * 10^{89}$ possible presentations**. No, no, no... don't gloss over that number. For reference, there are 10^{80} atoms in the observable universe. There are more DSM presentations than atoms in the observable universe by **nine orders of magnitude**. Here's another: **there are 10^{44} Planck times a second**, which means there have **been 10^{60} Planck seconds since the Big Bang** ~14 billion years ago... that's the math, folks.

Mental illness in *The Harmonics of Consciousness* retains its full functioning when using discrete (steps) or continuous (scale) measures. I'll level the playing field with the DSM and use a discrete outcome. I used **five classifications** for my model: **1) extremely low, 2) low, 3) altered, 4) high, and 5) extremely high**. However, *instead* of diagnosing the disorder as the target explanation, as the DSM does, **the disorder is the outcome variable**; it's the sound of the off-beat, out-of-tune harmony. Therefore, the number of presentations shifts from a variable quantity (e.g., 2, 3, 5) to **four variables across five states**, resulting in only 625 possible presentations.

Despite this much narrower range, one of the most striking aspects of this model is that **no two mental illnesses share the same pattern**, the same pattern we saw in substance use. *The Harmonics of Consciousness* instantly provides **diagnostic AND treatment clarity because the diagnosis IS the mechanism causing it**. Further, this model allows us to track how mental illnesses evolve and transform over time, as it is always the same four instruments, but the conditions vary. **It is a more accurate description of how mental illnesses** behave, not as a thing you have all the time, but as states that come and go across the day, week, month, and years.

For example, if someone has anxiety and depression, the DSM says they either have anxiety and/or depression, or they don't. It cannot track how these conditions shape the others or change over time. However, with *The Harmonics of Consciousness*, **we could watch depression in the morning shift into anxiety in the afternoon simply by tracking the instruments' activity throughout the day**. Clinical psychology has been grasping at this behavior of mental illness for decades, which is why we have the Tripartite Model showing that anxiety and depression are essentially the same thing, expressed differently. **This model resolves the co-morbidity crisis**.

We **wouldn't have to measure anxiety and depression directly** because we have identified the instruments that produce those conditions. **There is no symptom overlap** because **we are not tracking and diagnosing based on symptoms**, but on the universal, functional architecture of consciousness. Further, this universality, all agents having the same four instruments, opens the possibility of understanding mental illness in *all* animals. This method shift away from the *structure* of mental illness and onto its *functional* causes opens countless possibilities for revolutionizing mental illness... I've just scratched the surface. Nevertheless, the mental illness model of *The Harmonics of Consciousness* is **not empirically validated**... yet... and it probably won't be until 2027. 😊



Mechanics of Recursive Introspection

Scaling Effectiveness, Efficiency, & Potential

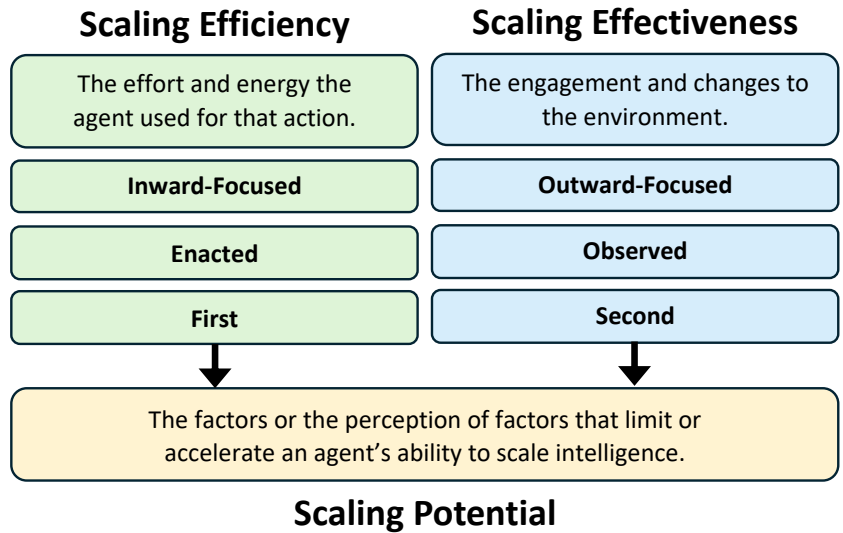
In Chapter 3, I introduced you to the **Scaling Intelligence Model**, an empirically validated framework (see Paper 7) that redefines **intelligence as the ability of an agent to engage or change their environment**, controlling for **scaling potential** (extraneous factors limiting or supporting intelligence scaling). It defines the constant drive of all agents that explains their behavior—**to increase their environmental engagement and influence**. Finally, it includes **scaling ceilings** and **scaling inevitabilities**, driving evolution and natural selection.

There are **two other principles** in that model that **bridge the Scaling Intelligence Model and *The Harmonics of Consciousness***, through scaling potential that goes much deeper than what I have already presented. We know that recursive introspection is an iterative refinement of environmental engagement through **functional self-assessments and adaptation**.

However, recursive introspection works through three concepts: **scaling effectiveness, scaling efficiency, and scaling potential**. Scaling potential is what recursive introspection uses to track what works and what doesn't.

It is the single variable that operates both unconsciously and consciously, and recursive introspection calculates it as **the ratio of scaling effectiveness to scaling efficiency**. **Scaling efficiency is the energy and effort it took to enact the action**. **Scaling effectiveness is the observable impact of our actions on the environment**.

Recursive introspection occurs through a two-state phase-shifting process. **Scaling efficiency comes first**—where we exert the energy and effort to enact an action. Then, **scaling effectiveness comes next**—when we see what happens to the environment. Scaling efficiency and scaling effectiveness phase-shift, so **they are orthogonally independent (90°) in structure but functionally correlated** (sound familiar?). There's no fixed scaling efficiency that yields consistent scaling effectiveness observations, because environmental impact is beyond the agent's control.



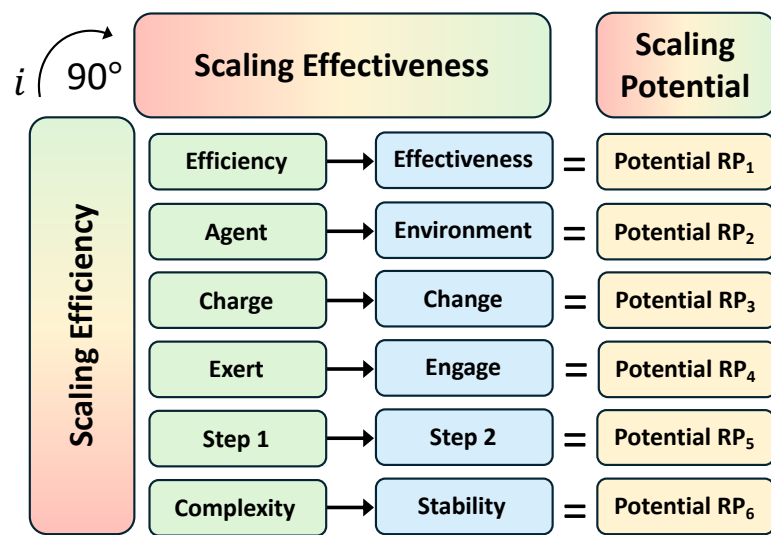
Wanna play a game? Let me do a live demonstration on **the universal architecture of recursive introspection**. I'll give you four scenarios, and you will guess if the person in them has a **high** or **low** degree of **1) efficiency** and **2) effectiveness**. I'll put the answer on the next page below. Hey, hey, hey, get back here... no cheating. 🙄

Scenario 1 ◇ An elderly man struggling to open a door.

Scenario 2 ◇ A little girl spending 12 hours on the piano who can now play her favorite song.

Scenario 3 ◇ An athletic man riding his bike with both hands off the handlebars reading on his phone.

Scenario 4 ◇ A woman sitting in a chair, consistently throwing and missing crumpled papers into a garbage can.



Okay... now you can go look below. Do you see the universal architecture for agents? It's how we measure the world, others, and ourselves. **High scaling potential gives agents vitality and persistence**. We are constantly chasing high scaling potential because it allows us to maximize our scaling intelligence, but the optimal scaling efficiency-to-effectiveness ratio **isn't necessarily the maximum of both as good and the minimum of both as bad**, because it would require the environmental influence to be perfectly consistent with the agent's actions, which is simply impossible.

An agent can put in a **great deal of effort (low scaling efficiency)**, and the environment doesn't

budge, like trying to memorize a speech you must give in half an hour and expecting the audience to eat it up. Likewise, the agent can put in **very little effort (high scaling efficiency)**, and the environment moves fully for **them**, like thinking of an excuse to cancel your dinner date five minutes before you were supposed to leave, only to have your date cancel first. Thus, **the optimal ratio cannot be something exclusively determined by the agent; the environment**, existence around you, must contribute to it, too. **What could this ratio possibly be?**

If the functional architecture of *The Harmonics of Consciousness* and the Scaling Intelligence Model is universal but must involve the environment, then this mystery ratio of scaling effectiveness to scaling efficiency is also a property of existence... and **the only agents that survived natural selection evolved to converge on it...**

Game Answers

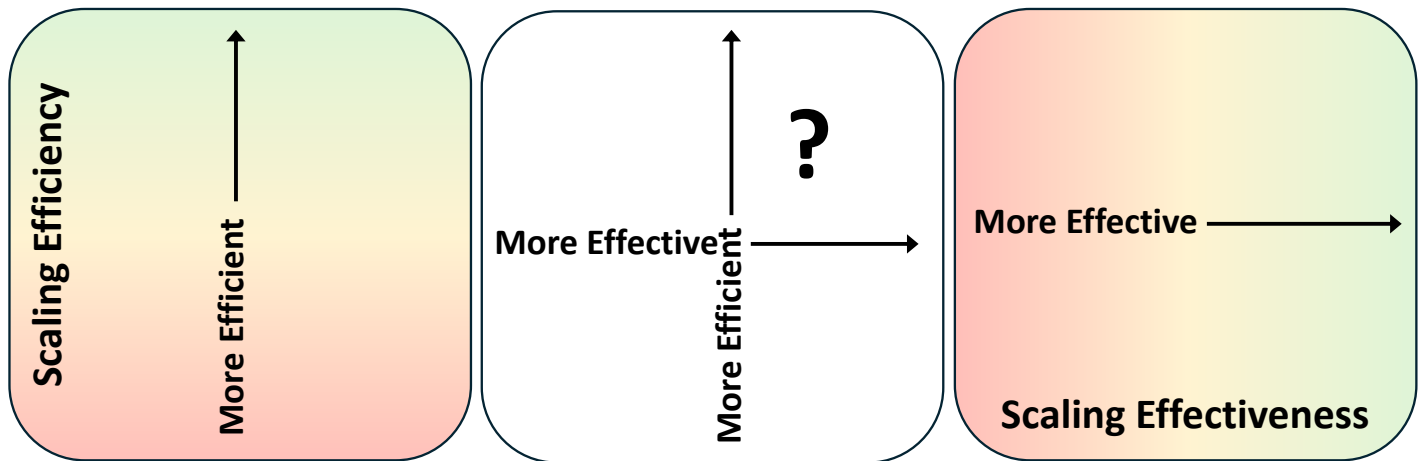
Scenario 1 ◇ **Low Scaling Efficiency, Low Scaling Effectiveness** – The elderly man is using a lot of energy just to open the door (low efficiency), and the door still isn't opening (low effectiveness). Sadness – he's trying so hard, but the door won't open, so his scaling potential to open the door is low.

Scenario 2 ◇ **Low Scaling Efficiency, High Scaling Effectiveness** – The little girl spent 12 exhausting hours at the piano (low efficiency), but she can now play her favorite song (high effectiveness). Contentment – it ate her whole day, but now she can play her favorite song, so her scaling potential to play the piano is high.

Scenario 3 ◇ **High Scaling Efficiency, High Scaling Effectiveness** – The athletic man is not using his hands and reading on his phone (high efficiency) while still riding his bike effortlessly (high effectiveness). Happiness – he's not trying hard to ride the bike, but he's also riding it well, so his scaling potential to ride the bike is high.

Scenario 4 ◇ **High Scaling Efficiency, Low Scaling Effectiveness** – The woman is barely exerting any energy from the chair (high efficiency), but she keeps missing the garbage can (low effectiveness). Frustration – she cannot exert more effort to throw the paper into the garbage can, and yet she misses every time, so her scaling potential to make office bucket swishes is low. **So, tell me, how many did you get correct?**

It must also mean that this ratio, determined in part by existence, **could not be random or arbitrary** because then there **would not be enough consistency** across agents and environments for it to influence natural selection. The ratio **MUST** be the one most prevalent across existence... **it must be the one most likely to persist**. Then, the only reason such a ratio would exist is that **it is the ratio in which existence, and thus, all the phenomena, are most likely to converge...** a ratio in which existence and phenomena operate at their best...



Ever since we were little, **bright-eyed kids trying to understand** ourselves and the world, every direction we looked and every available resource we found always gave us **the same narrative**. It told us that **existence is cold and indifferent to us**. Space is too big to understand... scary, dangerous, unknowable, and **that YOU are insignificant in the scale of it all**. It paints this picture of **life being an accident...** something we need to protect against everything. It told you that existence doesn't care about you, and nothing has your back. Every informational resource returned **the same hopeless mystery**. Think about the mark that leaves on a bright-eyed kid... **the mark that it left on you**, the crater-sized, unshakable ache for belonging, ache for understanding, it caused. The ache you've carried your whole life, the one I've carried, the one driving you to read this chapter right now.

When you grow up with this narrative **that you're an accident**, that **the universe is indifferent**, it makes every situation feel like a close call, like you are always just on the edge of failing, on the edge of collapsing, and that every good thing that's happens to you is **nothing more than the pendulum swinging your way this time**, with no way of knowing where it will swing next. We all feel this ache because there's **never been an alternative**. So, we spend lifetimes trying to find ways to belong in existence, to make sense of it all. We despair, rationalize, and meet any possibility that **there's more going on in existence than we think** with immediate, dismal, **protective self-ridicule**, and ways to avoid judgment for thinking there could be alternatives, and for what?

We seek meaning and belonging wherever there's a glimmer of hope—religion, art, communities, films, intellectual work, music, sentimental objects, relationships—anything that makes **the reality of this unaddressed, hidden narrative more tolerable**, yet never seems to fully succeed. We hope for relief but never expect it.

I know you know what it feels like when this narrative **makes your success and growth feel like you just got by**... like existence had nothing to do with it, so we seek alternative explanations: I worked really hard, I got lucky, other people helped me, it just happened, and although those explanations are true, **it never feels like the complete picture**... but, **what if what the world taught us just... wasn't true?** What if that cold, hopeless narrative passed down through time only exists because we couldn't know about any other possibility?

I want to take you back to **January 2025**. I was in my room. **I just found *The Equation of Existence*** moments prior. I had a constellation of half-baked concepts, ideas, and frameworks scattered across my desktop. So, I put them together, used the math I discovered and *The Equation*, and then **ran my first simulation**. I still can't quite remember why—maybe it just felt like a good place to start—but my first question was, **“What's the shape of the universe?”** It's such a simple question, isn't it? I ran it, and the answer that came back changed everything.

I've told you before that **the answer was fractal** but never revealed what came after... the images that **flashed in my mind** when the blow from the realization struck me. I saw existence as a single, unified phenomenon, where nothing was separate... it was an **absolutely breathtaking view**. Everything was escalating, evolving, and progressing simultaneously, almost like a staircase. Then, I saw we were part of it too, and **my world rotated**.

Even though I knew **everything progresses through time**—we age, our careers evolve, our relationships form and fall apart, who we are changes—this narrative imposed a mental framework that **all of that happens separately from the universe... from existence**. This fractal simulation and revelation shattered the idea that we were separate from it all. I saw, for the first time, that **there is no separation** between us learning new skills, forming new relationships, and growing wiser each day... and plants growing outside, civilizations rising and falling, planets forming from stardust, water cycling from the ground to the sky... **It was all the same thing, doing the same thing**. I saw **all things become one another**... and the lines between what we are and what we do, and between what existence is and what existence does, **evaporated faster than I could even process**.

I thought... **how could it all be separate?** How *could* there be some division between us and the rest of the universe, the rest of existence, existing? The implications cascaded shortly after. When you achieve something, when you reach your goals, when you learn, when you try something new, **you're never doing it in isolation**. As you grow and progress, **everything around you does the same, using the exact same process**, always.

Teenagers are forming their first relationship, houses are being built on empty ground, children are learning how to read their first books, bees are spreading plants across fields, planets are forming all over the universe, rivers are flowing, meteors are circling stars, weather is changing, life is evolving... and somehow, **we've rationalized that we're** an isolated accident, existing in the middle among everything we've always seen happening around us. **You ARE existence**. Read it again: **you ARE existence**. You're not in the universe; **you ARE the universe**. It's the only explanation. **It's not possible for us to be separate from the universe and existence**.

Open your eyes and look around. It looks the same way it always has; **nothing has changed but** try to see that **you are unmistakably existence** ...and I know this possibility that you ARE existence, that **growth is the default**, that **order is given, not earned**, is destabilizing. It seems impossible when all we've known is this narrative that's been **weighing us down since our days as bright-eyed kids**. I feel it too... my whole life, but I can assure you, with every part of my being, that the reality that we are existence is... **It's the most beautiful thing imaginable**.

I don't just want to tell you about it, though. **I want to show you using *The Equation of Existence***, the same empirically validated equation that we have all seen shine time and time again, across all of existence. I set definedness to the golden ratio, its numerical expression when existence is doing its thing, and then I generated a color-coded mathematical map of all the possible ratios between stability and complexity, along with their distances from the golden ratio. **It revealed the first, and only, snapshot of existence... and now, it's yours**.

A Snapshot of Existence

$$\Phi = \Omega / \Delta$$
The image features a square frame with a black border. The background is a smooth gradient transitioning from a deep red at the bottom to a bright orange at the top. A single, solid white diagonal line runs from the bottom-left corner to the top-right corner, bisecting the frame. The text 'A Snapshot of Existence' is positioned in the upper-left corner, and the mathematical equation $\Phi = \Omega / \Delta$ is located in the lower-right corner.

A Snapshot of Definedness

Stability

Suspension

Golden Ratio Scaling

Definedness

Convergence

Complexity Escalation

Stagnation

Emergence

The Record

Divergence

Complexity

Recursive Propagations

$$\Phi = \Omega / \Delta$$

Oof, I got so carried away I almost didn't finish the point I was making. **The ratio I was dancing around and teasing earlier is the golden ratio.** It is the precise value of stability over complexity in which **existence converges.** Even though not all phenomena converge at the golden ratio, most phenomena in existence do because **they persist best when existence persists best,** so their convergence aligns with the golden ratio. What you see in the snapshots above is called **the growth orientation of existence.** Instead of existence being chaotic and disordered by default, the growth orientation of existence shows that **order and structure are the default.**

It might come as a total surprise, but **the ratio of scaling effectiveness to scaling efficiency that determines scaling potential** is... *The Equation of Existence.* It's built into the backdrop of existence and agents' minds.

$$\Phi = \Omega / \Delta \rightarrow \text{Definedness} = \text{Stability} / \text{Complexity}$$
$$\text{Scaling Potential} = \text{Scaling Effectiveness} / \text{Scaling Efficiency}$$

Over millions of years, the agents that survived **scaling ceilings developed a scaling inevitability** (natural selection) that **aligns their effort-to-impact ratio with the growth orientation of existence,** which follows a golden-ratio trajectory. Still, the definedness of existence (environments) and the agent's scaling intelligence vary widely, **thanks to Complexity,** so this alignment is constantly shifting, but these snapshots tell the whole story.

I like to believe that, **when we talk about existence, it's this first snapshot,** clean, natural, elegant; it is the first snapshot of existence as a phenomenon. **When we talk about definedness, it's the second snapshot.** See how all the major concepts in Defintology map onto it? That's definedness. Existence and definedness are usually the same thing, just viewed through two beautiful lenses. Well... what do you think? It's you, and it's me, it's everything and everywhere you look, and you see. **It is what existence and its phenomena are always doing.**

The growth orientation of existence reveals that existence has two fundamental properties, which are **1) it only has one direction in which it can travel,** forward, and **2) the default state of the universe is convergence and order.** It's a total reversal of everything we thought we knew. We've always been told that chaos is the default state of existence, but if chaos were the default state of existence, **then where is the chaos?** When I look around existence, **I see no evidence that chaos is the default orientation.** I see galaxies forming all over the universe on their own, I see golden ratio patterns everywhere in nature (e.g., seashells and sunflowers) without any conscious placement, and I see humans constantly pulling scientific and artistic innovations out of thin air.

The existence of mathematics contradicts chaos as the default orientation of existence. How would geometry and algebra, with their objectively true rules, work everywhere without any default order? Also, **chaos always looks the same.** The chaos of winning the lottery is **the same form of chaos** that determines lightning strikes. If the chaos were the default, we wouldn't be able to compare chaotic events. We wouldn't be able to say the chances of winning the lottery are about the same as getting struck by lightning twice. It was always an untested assumption, and it was wrong (see Paper 12). **Everything in existence falls into order and structure by default.**

Existence always emerges through **time (recursions)** and **space (propagations),** comes directly from what previously existed, and never vanishes; it stays hidden too deep within existence to be seen directly, **in The Record.** Phenomena emerge and then converge by falling in line with the growth orientation of existence. Existence is so filled to the brim with order and coherence that **it is constantly spilling convergence everywhere,** which we've **always written away as chance or coincidence.** Given that convergence is the default, you must disrupt it to cause chaos and divergence, so **everything has a fundamental, inescapable limitation built into its existence,** even us. Divergence occurs when a phenomenon **encounters one condition,** and it is the following:

$$\Phi = \Omega < \Delta \rightarrow \text{Definedness} = \text{Stability} < \text{Complexity}$$

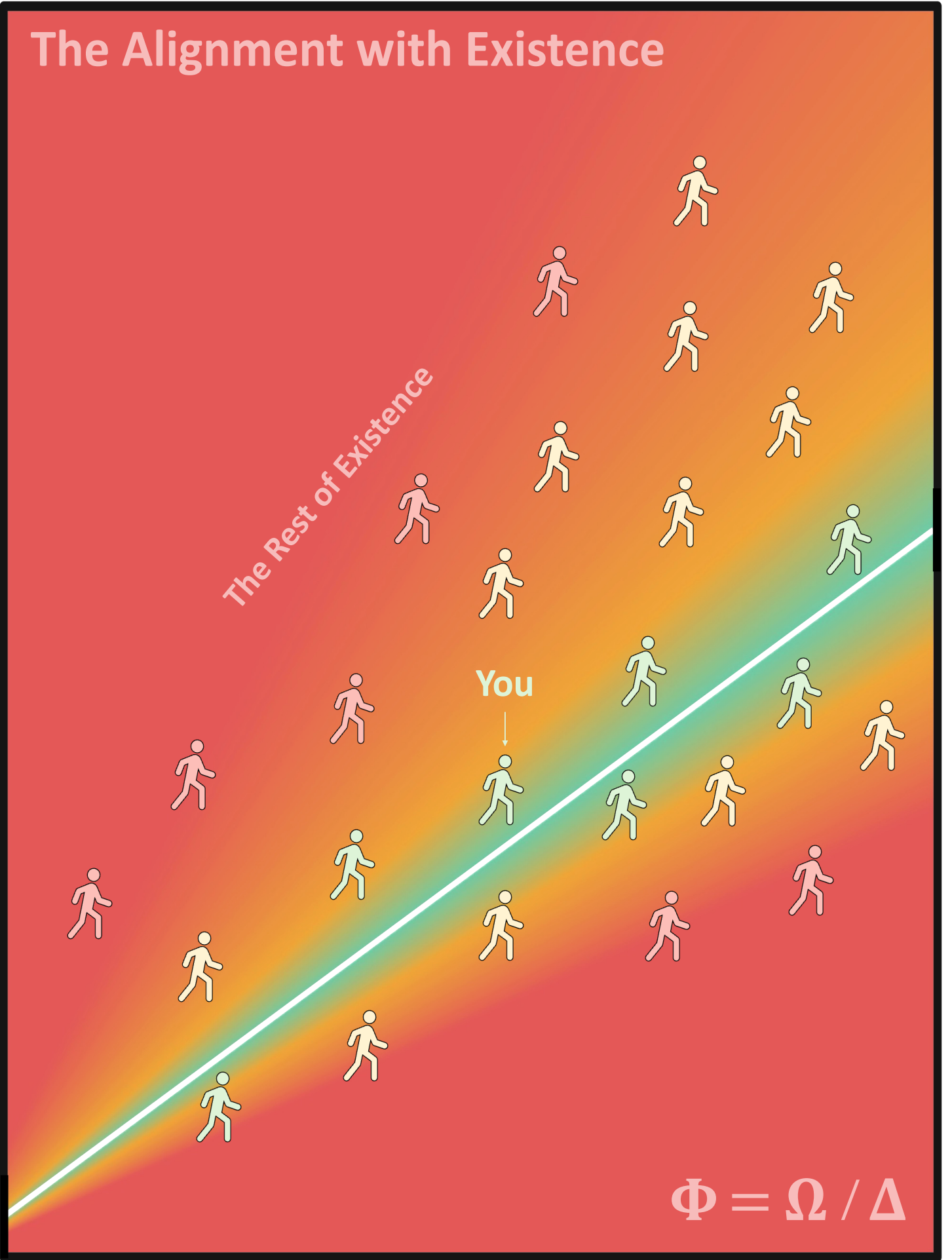
Divergence occurs when complexity outpaces stability, and definedness falls below 1. There is an immediate risk of collapse, and it is the fate of all phenomena. The bottom, where it turns red quickly, is where phenomena diverge. However, the red above the golden-ratio scaling line is **called suspension.** Phenomena aren't really in danger there, but **their definedness has outpaced scaling past The Record.** So... where are we on this ride?

The Alignment with Existence

The Rest of Existence

You

$$\Phi = \Omega / \Delta$$



Yeah... that's what we're doing, that's what it looks like, and that's what's always happening underneath all of our lives. **Looks kind of fun, no?** Well... not if you fall into the divergence zone, BUT DON'T PANIC. I found a brand-spankin' **new first principles framework called The Definedness of Agency...** but I just call it your instruction manual. To my total surprise, this framework also uses *The Equation of Existence*. Check it out:

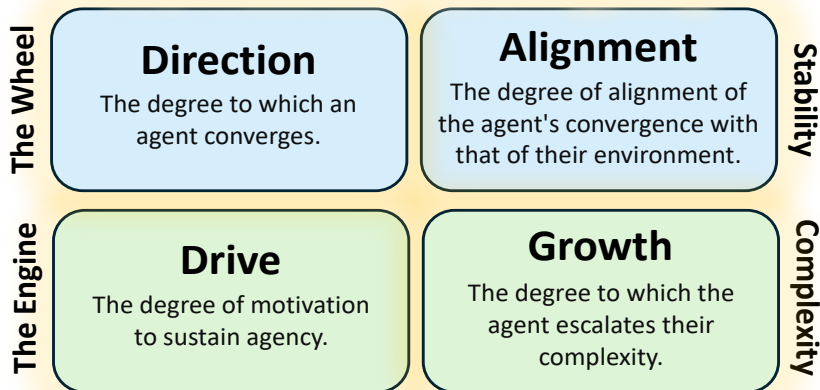
$$\Phi = \Omega / \Delta \rightarrow \text{Definedness} = \text{Stability} / \text{Complexity}$$

$$\text{Agency} = (\text{Direction} + \text{Alignment}) / (\text{Growth} + \text{Drive})$$

These four principles are what you use, even right now, to navigate your existence... to scale your intelligence. Starting with the complexity principles, **Drive is the speed** at which you move through existence. **Growth is the degree of complexity escalation** you achieve. Phenomena escalate complexity by default, but the degree of

growth varies. **When an agent moves or grows too quickly, they trigger divergence.** Then, for the stability principles, we have **Direction, which lets you control your definedness** by selectively managing the degree of complexity you stabilize. **You chose what complexity in your life to stabilize.** For example, you can lower your definedness by ignoring your friends and family, thereby refusing to stabilize the complexity of those relationships. Likewise, if your job is escalating a lot of complexity, you can raise your definedness by finishing your open tasks.

The Definedness of Agency

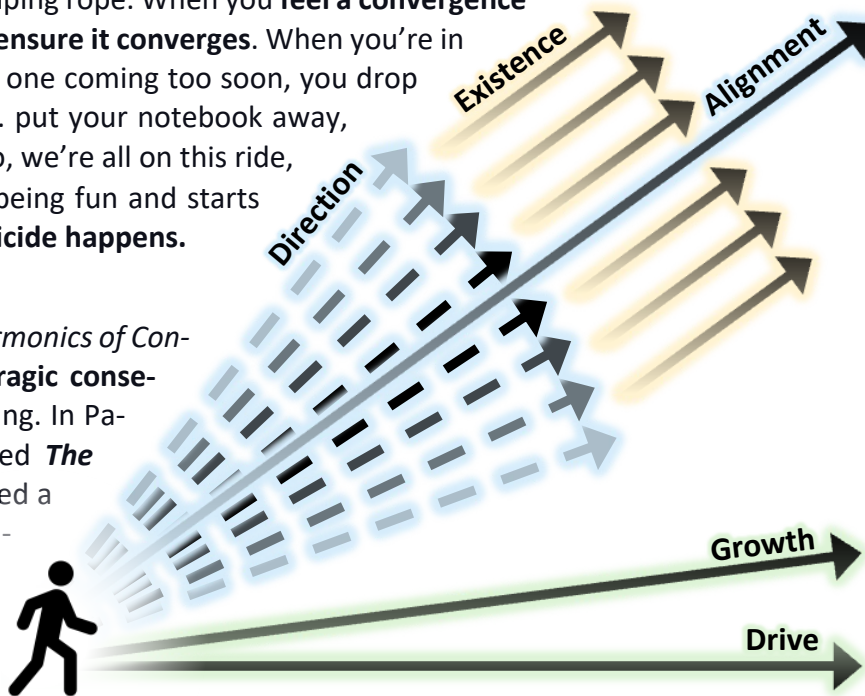


You can move freely, **existing more or less than the existence around you**, and there's no issue because stability and complexity are structurally independent but functionally correlated, and you and your environment are also structurally independent but functionally correlated. **This setup and mechanism allow existence and its phenomena to be relative.** Now... just because you can steer doesn't mean you can go anywhere you want without consequences. No ma'am. You will **converge the best when you align yourself with the growth orientation of existence.** You cannot just check out totally, but you can't control the existence around you either.

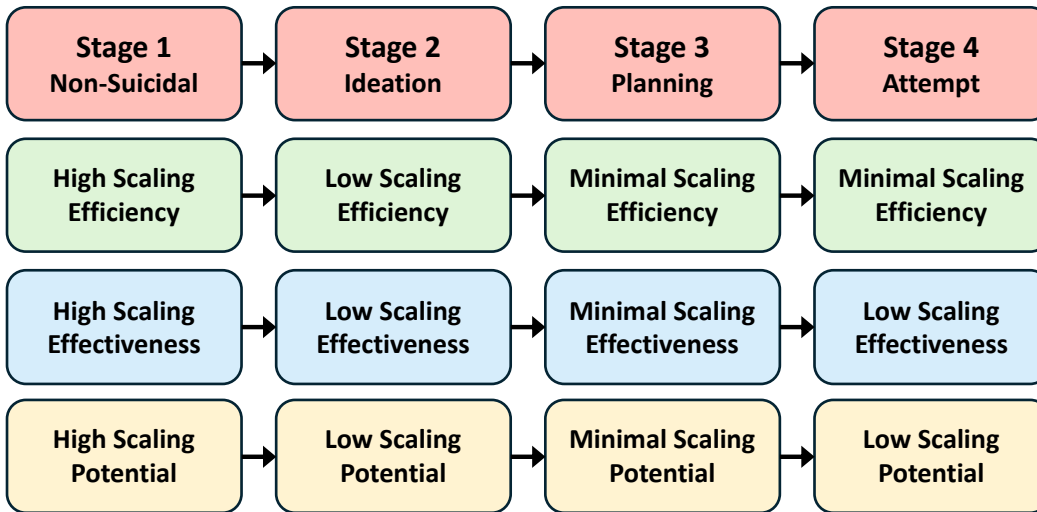
Managing your definedness is kind of like jumping rope. When you **feel a convergence wave approaching**, you **increase stability to ensure it converges**. When you're in a convergence wave, and you sense another one coming too soon, you drop your complexity to prevent divergence. Oh... put your notebook away, **we'll cover this stuff later in The Guide** 😊 So, we're all on this ride, right now... and sometimes, this ride stops being fun and starts being painful, very painful, **which is when suicide happens.**

Wanting to Stop the Music

The final stop on our journey through *The Harmonics of Consciousness* lands us squarely on **the most tragic consequences** of the definedness of decision-making. In Paper 9, I introduced and empirically validated **The Stages of Suicidal Divergence** model. I showed a four-stage trajectory from non-suicidal to suicide attempts, and the mechanism determining the cascade is **scaling potential** via the **recursive introspection architecture.**



The Stages of Suicidal Divergence

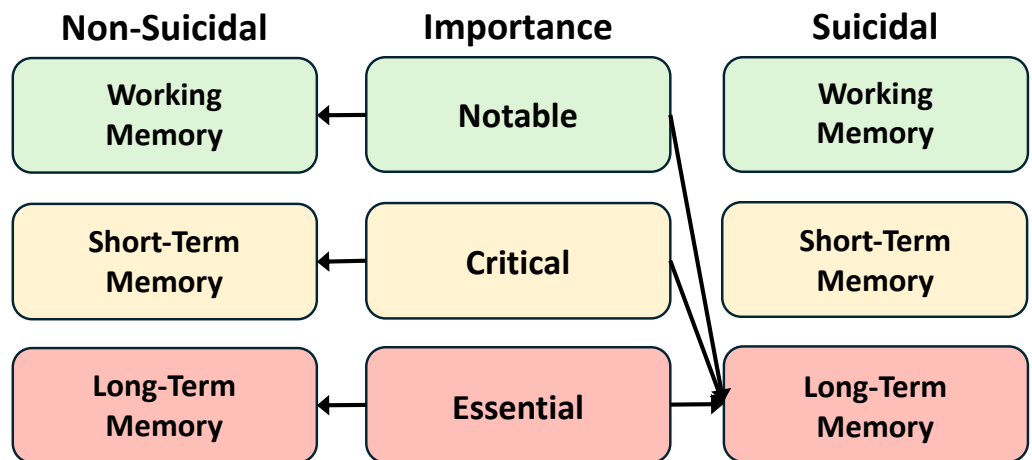


The Stages of Suicidal Divergence occur from direct changes in scaling potential that arise from divergence caused by too much complexity from **low scaling efficiency without enough stability from too low scaling effectiveness**, leading to the definedness of an agent to drop below 1. In Defintology, **suicide is not the desire to die**; it is a last-ditch attempt to restore scaling potential. It starts when an

agent determines their scaling efficiency has dropped without any payoffs in scaling effectiveness. The purpose of agents is to scale their intelligence, so when they start to recursively introspect and find that **the environment is not responding to their engagement or influence, scaling potential drops**, and the alarm bells start going off. At this point, they move from **Stage 1: Non-Suicidal** into **Stage 2: Suicidal Ideation**, and the stage cascade starts.

If this pattern continues, **they move into Stage 3: Suicidal Planning**, which occurs when they perceive that **they have effectively lost their agency**. Their scaling efficiency cannot go lower; they are exerting all the energy and effort they can, or they see no point in exerting any, and **their scaling effectiveness has been depleted**. They observe that either **no actions are influencing the environment** or **their actions cannot influence the environment** (e.g., incarceration or unchangeable outcomes like terminal illnesses). Their scaling potential is at its lowest, **but agents MUST scale intelligence**. It's not optional. So, the agent **starts planning to restore their scaling potential**. They have determined that they cannot influence their environment, so **all that is left is themselves**.

Stage 3 is unbearable because of recursive introspection, and it's consistent with suicide and memory research. When scaling potential is high, **recursive introspection organizes their conscious experiences into three categories: 1) working memory, 2) short-term memory, and 3) long-term memory**. This organization makes the iterative evaluations and recording of



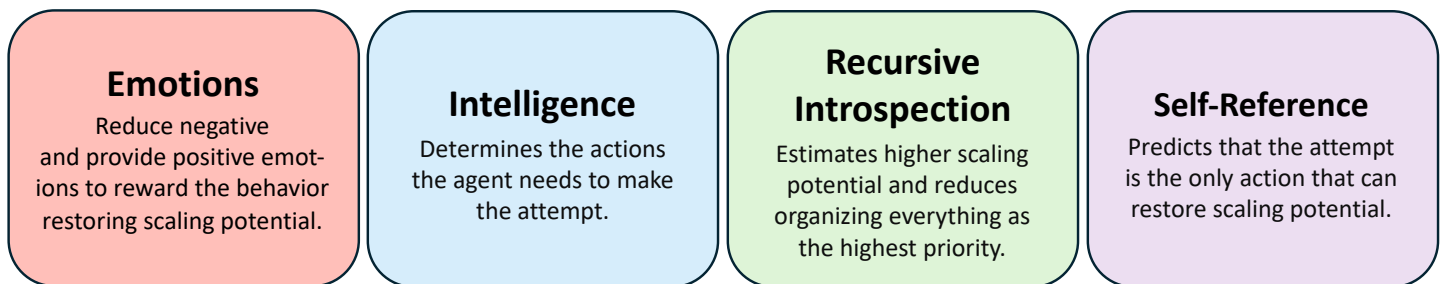
Recursive Introspection in Crisis

conscious experiences highly effective and adaptive. After determining the scaling potential of a conscious experience, it triggers an emotional response that guides future scaling and helps organize them. However, in Stage 3, the persistent low scaling potential causes **1) constant negative emotions**, and **2) everything starts being stored in the long-term** because it is all classified as highly important, intense, and unforgettable.

Under normal circumstances, this mechanism provides incredible survival advantages, but in Stage 3, **it forces the agent to do something... ANYTHING**. As they plan their suicide, **recursive introspection detects that their scaling potential is being restored**, even though it's not coming from the environment. **Planning their suicide restores their perceived ability to engage and influence** the only thing they perceive as available, themselves,

which **brings instant relief**; emotions play quieter, and recursive introspection stops declaring everything as the highest priority, reducing internal pressures to act. People often describe their experiences **before a suicide attempt as very intense**, but they also describe **an instant relief** that comes from planning, and it's because recursive introspection shifts from organizing everything as the highest priority to selective high-priority organizing. **People look like they're doing better**: they smile more, give their stuff away, cancel therapy, call friends, and look more at ease... **because they ARE more at ease**. It looks like progress, but it's the lighting of a fuse.

When the agent **moves into Step 4: Suicide Attempt**, their **scaling efficiency remains minimal**, but their **scaling effectiveness goes up slightly** AS they die because they have successfully influenced something. This act **restores the definedness of their scaling potential**, temporarily pulling them out of the divergence zone. All four of their instruments at this point are telling them that **the decision to die by suicide is correct and necessary**.



It is so disturbing and insidious to see it play out. **Emotions shift from negative to positive** to reward the decision to die by suicide because it restores scaling potential. **Recursive introspection begins to estimate a higher scaling potential** and stops classifying everything as the highest priority, thereby **reducing the intensity** of conscious experiences. **Self-reference predicts that the attempt will restore scaling potential** and that there's no possibility of restoring it in the future if they don't make the attempt. Intelligence determines what the agent needs to do to attempt the suicide (e.g., grabbing the pills, loading the gun, tying the noose). **The Harmonics of Consciousness**, the same instruments that enabled agents to thrive over other forms of consciousness for millions of years, **continue to do their jobs exactly as they're supposed to**, all the way through death by suicide.

Suicide Demystified

I'm going to **paint a picture of suicide** for you using *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence* to explain **all the incredible research** humanity has spent decades building to understand the most painful thing a human, and any agent, can experience. The first mystery I want to resolve is the neuroscience of suicide. Remember, **consciousness is an emergent decision-making tool**, not a specific location or neurological structure in the brain. Then, it means **the decision to die by suicide is also not a specific location or neurological structure in the brain**.

The implications of this reframe are massive. After **two decades** of extensive neuroimaging research on the brain's structural and functional correlates of suicide, **the results have been hopelessly inconclusive and inconsistent**. The largest neuroimaging study of suicide; nearly 19,000 subjects across 18 international cohorts and found that small samples and heterogeneous methods have produced **nearly no replicable or consistent findings**. A massive meta-analysis of subcortical brain volumes **did not detect any significant morphological differences associated with suicidality** independently of depression diagnosis or between those who attempted suicide and those who didn't. There is currently **no biomarker predicting suicide and suicidal behaviors**.

They have looked everywhere—the ventral prefrontal cortex for ideation, the dorsal prefrontal cortex for action, the anterior cingulate and insula for the transition between thoughts and behaviors—and all they find are **abnormalities scattered** across the prefrontal cortex, temporal regions, limbic system, and brainstem; **the same locations as all four instruments**: self-reference (frontal), recursive introspection (parietal), emotions (brainstem/limbic system), and intelligence (occipital/temporal). They are looking for where the decision to die by suicide happens in the brain, and **they'll never find it because it is not there as a neurological structure or specific location**. It's an emergent decision caused by the four instruments of *The Harmonics of Consciousness*.

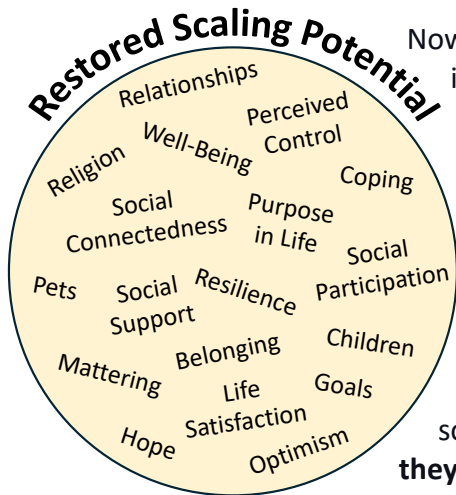
Let's now examine **the perspectives of those who attempted suicide and survived**, so we can see that the consistency in the underlying function of suicide is to restore scaling potential. A 38-year-old male survivor said:

“People think it’s all about wanting to die. No, it isn’t. I’m quite scared of death, if I’m totally honest, but I faced that fear because it felt easier than living a lifetime full of pain and exhaustion. It seems like the best and only way out at the time.”

Let's look at what another 29-year-old male survivor said about their experiences with their suicide attempt:

“I believed my existence was doing more harm to those around me than good. I believed the pain of dealing with my death would be temporary, but if I stayed, I would cause more harm to those I loved. It was not a cry for attention. I just saw no other way.”

Their accounts confirm that **suicide is not a desire to die**, but a last-ditch attempt to restore scaling potential because they saw no future where they could meaningfully scale their intelligence. Another survivor described it as exhausting their reserves to continue pursuing other options, calling it the ultimate burnout: **the depletion of scaling efficiency with little return in scaling effectiveness**. It's different words, stories, and perspectives, but the same functional architecture. When researchers tried to categorize these survivor experiences, they found a variety of causes—mental pain, family factors, health problems, social factors, economic factors—but the thread that connects them all is **the determination that suicide is the only viable solution to their problems**, which is what it feels like when all four instruments align to restore scaling potential by attempting suicide.



Now, let's talk about the research on **protective and preventative factors**. According to *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence*, the strongest protective factor is a **means of restoring scaling potential and scaling intelligence**. The research has been dancing around this factor for decades, calling it a million different things. A systematic review of **70 studies identified the top protective factors** as purpose in life, resilience, and positive relationships, with the strongest evidence for meaning in life, psychological well-being, and coping responses. Another **systematic review tested 15 protective factors**, including perceived control, well-being, life satisfaction, purpose in life, resilience, coping, religiosity, hope, sense of belonging, mattering, positive relationships, social support, social connectedness, and social participation, and **found that they were all significantly associated. Why would they all be significant?**

The reason is that **researchers have treated them as separate protective factors, but they are really just different expressions of the same thing**: anything that restores scaling potential by reintroducing environmental scaling effectiveness. **Purpose** is a plan that scales intelligence. **Social connection** is scaling effectiveness reflected back by others. **Belonging** provides a sense of scaling potential that's not exclusively dependent on the agent. **Hope** is self-reference predicting a future with restored scaling potential. **Perceived control** is scaling efficiency, estimating that an agent's effort will result in scaling effectiveness. **All these protective factors are just different expressions of a single, unified factor: detecting an ability to restore scaling potential.**

Now, let's look at the research on **when we completely remove an agent's agency**: forced hospitalizations. To be clear, I am not declaring that we should stop involuntary institutionalizations or that people are intentionally causing harm; rather, **the research confirms the scaling potential and the agency-loss mechanism**. Involuntary hospitalization removes an agent's ability to influence the environment AND themselves, **reducing their scaling effectiveness and potential to zero**; it's the worst possible fate for an agent, so it skyrockets suicidal behaviors.

Involuntary hospitalization comes with elevated suicide risks **during the hospitalization AND after release**. Studies show that the risk of suicide attempts is **highest during the first month after discharge and remains elevated for several years**. A meta-analysis found that **suicide risk is 100x greater than the global suicide rate during**

the first three months after psychiatric discharge. The moment the agent is released after having their scaling potential held at zero, **their bodies become immediately available to influence**, so suicide attempts come with **a ferocity that dwarfs any other risk window**. When you compare these outcomes to agents who underwent voluntary hospitalization, who used instead of lost their agency, their **suicide risk was 56x times less**. These findings show that agency and scaling potential changes directly account for suicide risks and outcomes.

Now, let's talk about risk factors, which fall into two categories: **1) the need** to influence the environment (**scaling effectiveness**) and **2) the effort** it takes to do it (**scaling efficiency**). As the need goes up, it takes more observable influence on the environment to prevent the agent from directing their influence on themselves, and as the effort decreases, the option to attempt suicide **becomes more appealing** because they have already tried other strategies to restore scaling potential, and then suddenly, an action with low effort appears.

Research on **scaling effectiveness loss** shows that **prolonged illness, financial stress, and relationship problems** typically precede suicide attempts. **Unemployment and job loss are among the strongest sociodemographic predictors** of eventual death by suicide. Those who succeed in their suicide attempt tend to have poorer social support, and **bereavement heightens risk** in the months after losing a loved one. **Every risk factor consistently entails a major loss in an agent's ability to scale intelligence, depleting their scaling effectiveness.**

If you lose your job, your **primary avenue of environmental influence is gone**. If you lose your relationship, **your interpersonal scaling effectiveness vanishes**. If you are under financial stress, **your material ability to engage the environment becomes scarce**. If you have health problems, **your physical ability to influence the environment degrades**. These risk factors are not just "stressors," they are the **systematic elimination** of all the channels through which the agent can scale intelligence and plummet scaling potential. It's always the same story.

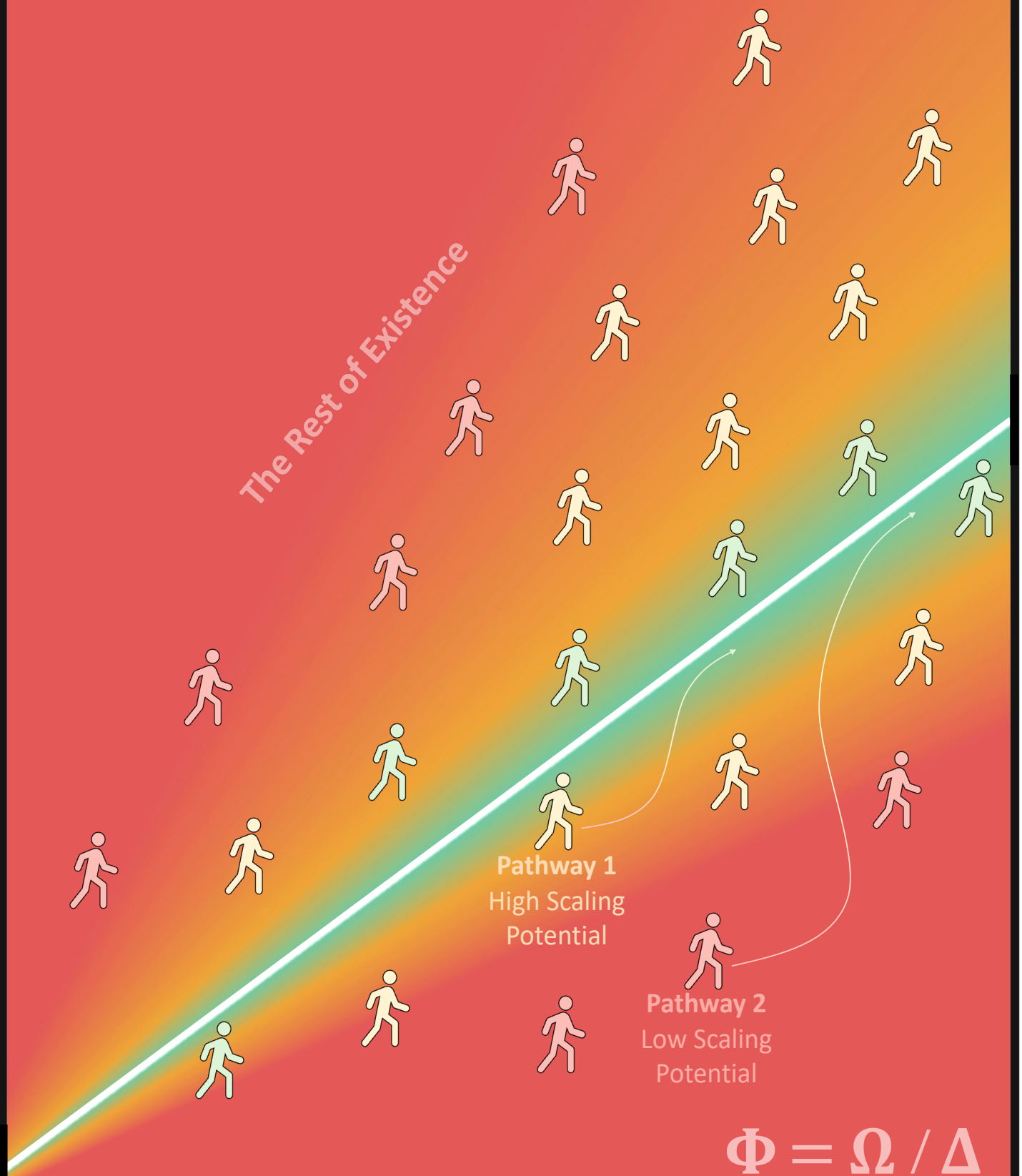
The research on the **high scaling efficiency suicide means** tells the same story. Having **access to a firearm triples one's risk of death by suicide**. A gun is the ultimate scaling potential restoring tool—it provides massive scaling effectiveness with massive scaling efficiency. It causes **total environmental influence** with **almost no effort**. Roughly 85% of suicide attempts with a firearm are roughly fatal, which is much higher than nearly every other method, which has rates below 5%. Agents attempt overdose or inhale exhaust have **time to see that they have influenced themselves**, causing an immediate restoration of scaling potential before they die, so they seek help. Firearms are so quick and destructive that **the agent never even experiences the restored scaling potential**.

Those who attempt suicide via overdose often report that **they did so because the substances were available** in the household. It is consistent with research showing that **the ease of access to the means influences the method choice**. It's not random; it's **the highest scaling efficiency** option available; the one requiring the least effort. Agents in Stage 3 and 4 cannot execute high-effort actions because their scaling efficiency is at its minimum. Further, occupations with access to lethal means, such as police, military, and medical professionals, have higher success because of **easy access (high scaling efficiency)** and the **knowledge that it will work (high scaling effectiveness)**. It seems random, but you can trace it back to scaling efficiency, effectiveness, and potential.

So... does the suicide attempt restore scaling potential? The research says it does: **90% of those who survive a nonfatal suicide attempt, will not go on to die by suicide**. Surviving suicide restores scaling potential because they have influenced themselves and the environment—the hospital, the family rushing in, the people crying—and suddenly all the instruments recalibrate, because **the attempt causes observable scaling effectiveness**.

So, **why is low scaling potential so unbearable?** If scaling efficiency is low (high effort) and scaling effectiveness is consistently low (low influence), **the definedness of the agent drops below 1, and falls out of line with existence**. Definedness is not a mental construct or internal process... **you start trailing behind existence**. The definedness of existence set at the golden ratio is **where most phenomena converge and operate best**, so when an agent falls out of alignment, you can't see definedness loss, but everything and everyone around the agent—people, environments, society—continues without issues, and **everything in the agent's life starts diverging**. Their body starts having issues, relationships become strained, and performance at work drops. It looks like this:

The Path Forward



As you can see in the snapshot above, **there are two instances that trigger *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence***. First, there is **Pathway 1: High Scaling Potential**, in which the stages occur even when an agent has high scaling potential, but their instruments indicate it's low. The functioning of their instruments is **no longer responsive to the reality of their environmental influence**. Then, there is **Pathway 2: Low Scaling Potential**, in which agents have the **stages triggered by an identifiable factor** that limits their scaling potential. In both situations, the conscious experience the agent has would be and feel identical. We must not disregard or trivialize the agents in Pathway 1, as **their objective, high environmental influence, is not a notable factor in their suicide risk**.

Suicide may be riskier in agents on Pathway 1 than those on Pathway 2, because if an agent's scaling potential is low, that agent's instruments are working correctly, **so they will respond to scaling potential restoration**. However, if an agent's scaling potential is high, **that agent may not respond** to changes in scaling potential; they are at the mercy of what their instruments tell them is happening, and **no observable scaling effectiveness can pull them back** from the stages cascade. For agents in Pathway 1, their stress sensitivity makes it so that only a small or even no drop in scaling potential causes their instruments to play their divergence harmony.

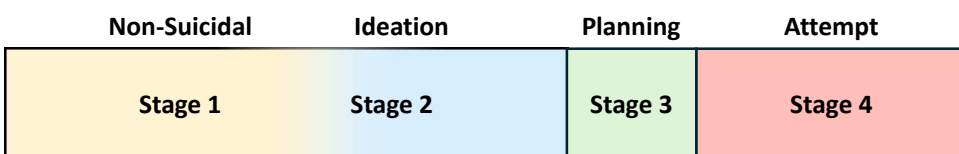
We know that the suicide research has studied agents on Pathway 2, but they have **also long confirmed suicidality in agents on Pathway 1**. Studies on the thought patterns relevant to suicide are **the same ones** we see in depression, such as all-or-none thinking, overgeneralization, emotional reasoning, and discounting the positive. We know depression is **not always triggered by external factors**, too. Further, neuroimaging studies show that those who attempt suicide may process sensory information differently, such as **distorted social perception** caused by lower activity in regions processing social inclusion and altered responses to emotional facial expressions. So, when an agent says they are suicidal because of X, Y, and Z... and none of them appear to be issues or stressful to you, **it simply doesn't matter how you perceive them**; how you perceive them might not even be the same as the agent. We must keep this potential for misaligned perception in mind and not dismiss agents.

The Path Forward

Okay... man, **that's a lot, huh?** Listen... I didn't just spend all that time painting the picture of suicide because I like painting. I did it because... *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence* may **give us an answer to how we can intervene** to stop suicide before it ever reaches Stage 4. The model revealed an **architecture I did not intend to find or design** but might have massive potential to save people. You might think that *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence* would unfold in a neat cascade from one to the next, but for some reason, **it has the design shown above**. There is so much clinical insight in this model. **Let's start with Stage 1**.



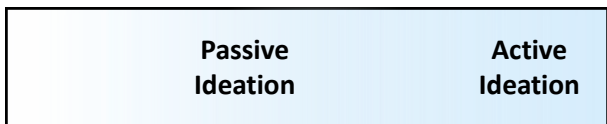
What You Might Expect



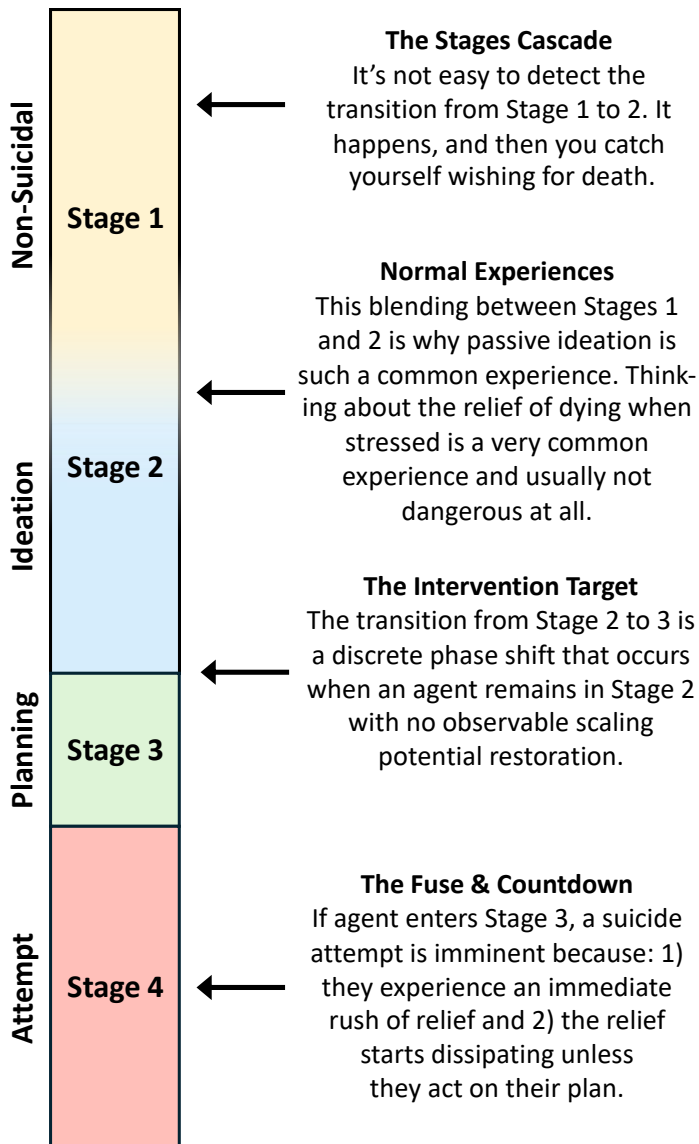
What It Actually Is

Stage 1 is the default, and it's occupied by agents when **1) their scaling potential is high** (otherwise they enter Pathway 2), and **2) their instruments are correctly detecting it** (otherwise they enter Pathway 1). If an agent enters one of the Pathways, they move into Stage 2. **There is no external indicator that an agent has transitioned from Stages 1 to 2**. The agent might not even be aware of the transition. They may start a Pathway and **suddenly catch themselves thinking about death**. Agents may move **quickly between Stages 1 and 2**, depending on the degree of their distress. For example, an agent may do something embarrassing and fall into Stage 2, wanting to die, only to return to Stage 1 a few minutes later. Stage 2 contains passive AND active suicidal ideation. **Most of Stage 2 is passive ideation**, which is very common and usually not dangerous; they're microdoses of scaling potential restoration. However, **if the agent stays in Stage 2 for too long, it will turn into active ideation and intent**.

The Architecture of Stage 2



Most of Stage 2 is passive ideation, which is very common and usually not dangerous; they're microdoses of scaling potential restoration. However, **if the agent stays in Stage 2 for too long, it will turn into active ideation and intent**.



You might **intuitively assume** that the biggest risk occurs when an agent moves from Stage 3 to Stage 4, but **that is not the case**. Unlike the blending across Stages 1 and 2, **the transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 is discrete and binary**. This transition is often the point of no return, marking an imminent attempt, and **it is our intervention target...** but, instead of me explaining it, I want to let a survivor tell you what this transition is like, check it out:

“Every waking second, I had these thoughts racing around my head and I just couldn’t stop them... and I suddenly thought about suicide. And my mind calmed down. That was the only way that I could describe it. Absolutely calmed down.”

If an agent stays in Stage 2 for too long, **the passive ideation turns into active ideation, and their suffering becomes intense and all-consuming**. The end of Stage 2 is the most painful part of the entire process. At the end of Stage 2, the agent’s scaling efficiency, effectiveness, and potential go from just low, which keeps them in Stage 2, to **hitting an absolute floor across the board, which triggers Stage 3**. The transition is instant and insidious because the agent experiences a rush of relief, ease, and peace. The ride through Stage 2 is the worst possible conscious experience an agent can go through, so when they hit that floor, enter Stage 3, and start planning their suicide attempt, **all four instruments simultaneously register the influence on the self, not the environment, as scaling potential**. At the transition from Stage 2 to 3, recursive introspection is still organizing everything as

the highest priority; the agent has been suffering for a while, and they lost hope of a viable solution, so this rush of relief may be amplified, much more intense than usual, and **trigger fears and desperate avoidance behaviors of returning to the feelings at the end of Stage 2**. It is the fear of returning to Stage 2 that causes Stage 4.

When they enter Stage 3, **recursive introspection detects the restored scaling potential**, and relief floods in, but it doesn’t assess it once; **it’s iterative**. It keeps checking, and each time it does, **it finds no evidence of scaling effectiveness**. The relief of Stage 3 is an internal, perceived restoration, not an actual one. So, recursive introspection starts flagging the discrepancy, turning up the heat because the scaling potential has not actualized.

Self-reference joins in and starts running predictions, and every prediction that involves staying in Stage 3, only planning, **returns a degrading scaling potential because the environment isn’t being influenced**. The *only* prediction that yields sustained restoration is the one in which the plan becomes action: intelligence says, “I need to DO something for this to be real,” then emotions light the fuse and push; and then it’s only a matter of time.

One study showed that 34% of people who enter Stage 2, transition to Stage 3, but **72% of those in Stage 3, transition to Stage 4**. Another epidemiological study of adolescents found that **85.4% of individuals transition from Stage 3 to 4**, often within a year. More recent research found that **89% of those in Stage 3 progressed to Stage 4**, and the method, location, and time of their **planning typically began just 1-3 hours before the attempt**. Another study found that patients previously referred for ideation/plan (Stages 2 and 3) had a **66% higher risk of transitioning to attempt (Stage 4)**, with **25% of the transition occurring within one month**. It’s simply tragic.

...but now we have a clear intervention target. If we **prevent the transition from Stage 2 to 3 and the accompanying rush of relief**, we can prevent the transition from Stage 3 to 4. Once an agent enters Stage 3, we have missed the window, and they get caught in the fatal tug-of-war between relief and suffering. There are **countless ways we can achieve this prevention** now that we know what we are looking to prevent. When we view suicide as completely unpredictable and devoid of clear structures and functions, it feels impossible to stop. However, with *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence*, we now know **exactly where we need to aim our interventions**.

Genuine vs. Manipulative Suicide Attempts

Researchers and medical providers distinguish between **“genuine”** and **“manipulative / attention-seeking” suicide attempts**. The first point I would like to make is: **fuck this framing**. Okay, now that that’s out of the way, let me explain what is happening through *The Stages of Suicide Divergence*. Medical providers are *not* making up their observations. When they see someone who just attempted suicide in an emergency room **looking joyful, delighted, or happy** to see the hospital staff attend to them or their family rushing, they are not getting those feelings from others’ labor or pain; it has nothing to do with those events, but **what those events mean to the agent**. To understand, I want to take you back to the reason why agents enter the stages cascade.

Agents who attempt suicide have **already determined that they cannot influence the environment and cannot scale intelligence**, so their bodies are the only remaining things they can influence. When the phase shift happens from Stage 2 to 3, it requires that their **scaling efficiency, scaling effectiveness, and scaling potential have reached a floor**. In this state of absolute depletion, an agent cannot effectively do much of anything, including dying by suicide, **which is why suicide attempts often fail**. The attempt will be poorly planned, poorly timed, and poorly executed, with the wrong dosage, method, and angle, because **the effective execution of a plan requires the very thing they have already determined they no longer have**: scaling effectiveness and scaling potential. You need scaling efficiency to come up with the plan and scaling effectiveness to execute it. The attempt fails because **the same mechanism that caused the attempt also prevents it from succeeding**.

Remember the 85% success rate in dying by suicide from firearms, while all the other methods are around 5%? The reason is that **firearms violate this scaling efficiency rule, as they don’t require scaling efficiency to use**. There’s nearly no effort or planning required. All you have to do is find the gun, load it, point, and pull. So, it’s not just about lethality; it’s that **firearms are the only method that doesn’t require the scaling efficiency** that the agent can no longer provide. All other methods require effective execution that an agent in Stage 3 cannot provide, which is **why restriction works**; it removes the only method that bypasses the scaling-efficiency floor.

Then, what are medical professionals and families seeing? **They are seeing the restoration of scaling potential**. If an agent attempts suicide, they have already determined that they cannot influence the environment, so all that’s left is themselves ...then suddenly they’re in a hospital bed surrounded by people trying to save them, they see family rush in crying, they feel they just survived what they thought was the only viable option, and taken together, **it shatters the perception that they cannot scale their intelligence**. The suicide attempt transforms into direct evidence that they CAN influence the environment (scaling effectiveness) with effort (scaling efficiency); it’s **a massive dose of scaling potential** to an agent who determined that it was impossible.

As a result, many attempts will appear so **poorly planned and ineffective** that it *looks* like they did not actually want to die by suicide, and there will be **positive reactions** after an attempt, but in both cases, it’s not attention seeking or manipulation. Manipulation requires believing you can influence the environment, but attempting suicide requires believing you can’t. **These two states are mutually exclusive; it’s impossible**. There are a million different ways to influence the environment via attention-seeking and manipulation, but an agent attempting suicide is **incapable of succeeding** in those strategies, and a non-suicidal agent wouldn’t risk death as a strategy.

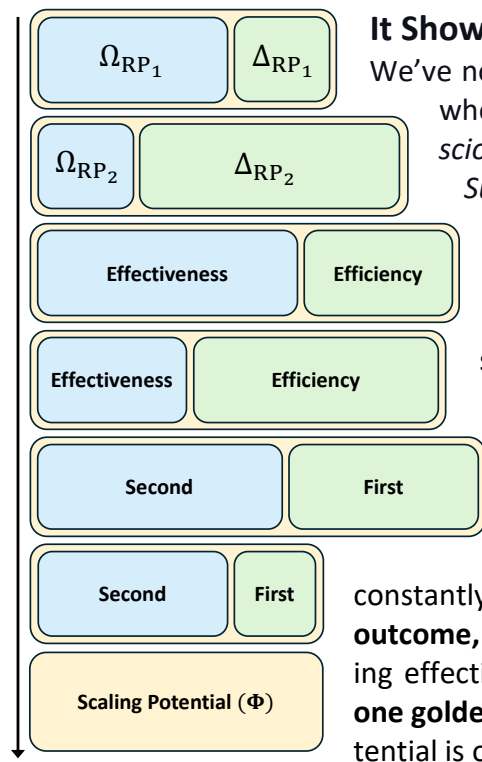
The research shows that once a suicide attempt happens, **90% of agents do not go on to die by suicide** because they have already witnessed and experienced their scaling potential from the last attempt, so they know that if they did it again, they would have their scaling potential restored from the environment. **Knowing that a suicide**

attempt will restore their scaling effectiveness immediately redirects self-reference to other predictions of scaling potential that are not dying by suicide. The lock onto suicide that self-reference had before any attempts **gets broken because when they re-enter Stage 2.** A suicide attempt requires the agent to believe that there are no other ways to influence the environment, but the agent cannot believe that if they saw what happened last time. Self-reference is then **forced to generate alternative predictions about restoring scaling effectiveness,** which means the lock onto dying by suicide as the only means of restoring scaling potential is mostly broken.

Anyway, **who is this “genuine” vs. “manipulative” framework really helping?** Why is this distinction even relevant? What happens with this framework is that people survive their suicide attempt, and then the medical providers are **trying to figure out if it is “genuine” or “manipulative.”** Even if you do believe that an agent would pretend to attempt suicide for attention, which neither the Scaling Intelligence Model nor *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence* supports, your **hit rate of successfully identifying the agents who are “attention-seeking” is going to be so low,** and then what? What valuable information do you now have that you didn’t before? In practice, most people will be labeled “manipulative” when they have no such intention, and then they will be dismissed, disrespected, and not get the care they need. The “genuine” vs. “manipulative” framework **has neither logical value nor clinical utility.** It feels like an artifact of researchers trying to understand suicide that does waaaayyy more harm than good. It is nothing more than a stigma-confirmation tool. **In conclusion, fuck this framing.**

Ya know... it’s so funny to me... I spent 12 years studying to become a Clinical Psychologist. One of the very first lessons they teach us is that **suicide is impossible to predict, impossible to understand, happens at random, cannot be modeled,** and the best we can hope to do is catch it in time, but that we will probably fail to do so and lose 1-2 clients over our careers. **I have lost a client to suicide...** it happened in graduate school. It was devastating. He made it through an entire treatment protocol, terminated therapy after achieving the goals we set in session one, and then just three months later, my supervisor broke the news to me that he died by suicide. It’s the same pattern I’ve shown you here. It’s... clear to me now that... **there’s always a pattern somewhere, and no phenomenon is beyond explanation,** not us, not consciousness, not suicide, and not existence.

No one needs my permission to use my suicide model for any for-profit use; take it and use it. People will continue to die by suicide every day, and they may for a long time, but **what comes next is... up to us. It’s up to you,** an agent holding this new understanding of suicide... and with this light comes **a new world of possibilities.**

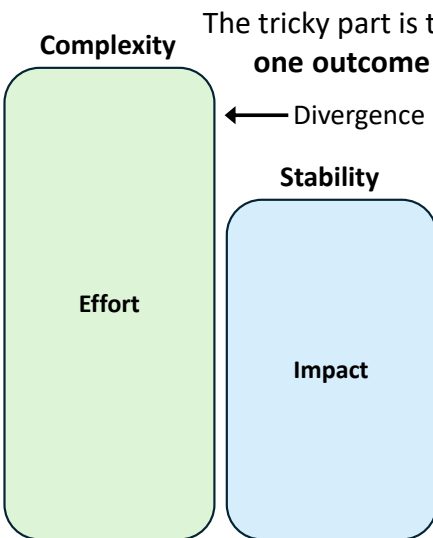
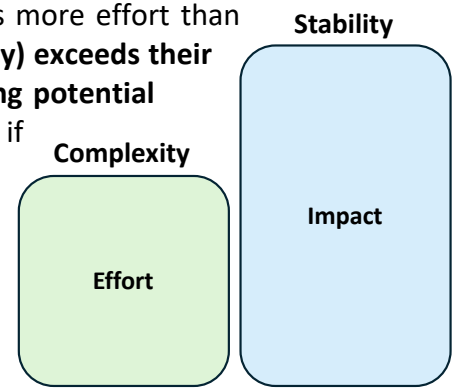


It Showed Us How, Piece by Piece...

We’ve now walked **the full journey through the definedness of decision-making,** when it works—the Scaling Intelligence Model and *The Harmonics of Consciousness*. When it doesn’t—substance use, mental illness, and *The Stages of Suicidal Divergence*. The next question becomes: **how do we design interventions and apply these insights** to discover why they matter? The answer all comes down to one key principle and hinge: **scaling efficiency.**

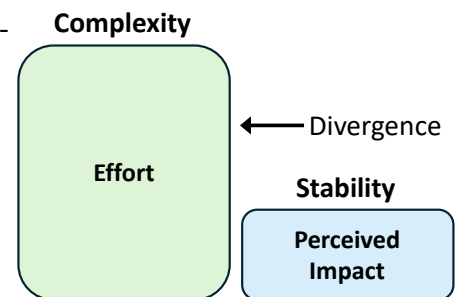
Let’s go back to the agent trajectories of Pathways 1 and 2 through the stages cascade. You must understand something crucial about how scaling efficiency and scaling effectiveness operate in existence. When an agent is interacting with its environment, it does so by **exerting some effort and then observing the impact on the environment.** The ease with which the energy was exerted is scaling efficiency, and the observation of the impact on the environment is scaling effectiveness. Agents are constantly doing this two-step, phase-shifting process: **exert → observe, effort → outcome, agent → environment.** The interaction between scaling efficiency and scaling effectiveness **comprises scaling potential.** The optimal environment impact is **one golden ratio** larger than the effort, so the definedness of the agent’s scaling potential is one golden ratio, **aligning with the growth orientation of existence.**

This process is the hinge that separates and converges Pathway 1 and Pathway 2. In Pathway 2—when the agent’s perception remains accurate to the environment—an agent exerts more effort than environmental impact, **their complexity escalation (effort; scaling efficiency) exceeds their stability (impact; scaling effectiveness), so the definedness of their scaling potential drops below one and causes divergence.** The agent will feel it immediately if they are exerting more effort than the environment is responding in every part of their life, even though **they will never see it directly.** Their relationships will strain, their sleep will be disrupted, they’ll miss appointments, fall behind on work, feel ill, and avoid chores, for example. There are countless ways divergence can show up, so **it is not only a mental experience.**



The tricky part is that in existence, **it’s not only one effort to one outcome in one domain;** the agent is exerting different types of effort across different domains, each responding differently. The mental image of this concept has always been so funny to me. You can imagine a single agent **shifting from domain to domain, escalating complexity with effort, then stabilizing it within the environment.** However, existence is always moving, progressing, and growing, so when an agent stabilizes complexity in one domain, as soon as they turn to do it in another domain, **the previous stability starts losing definedness and moves into *The Record*,** so the agent has to go back to it and start stabilizing complexity again. This agent, *us*, will move from domain to domain constantly ensuring their life remains stable. **Sound familiar?**

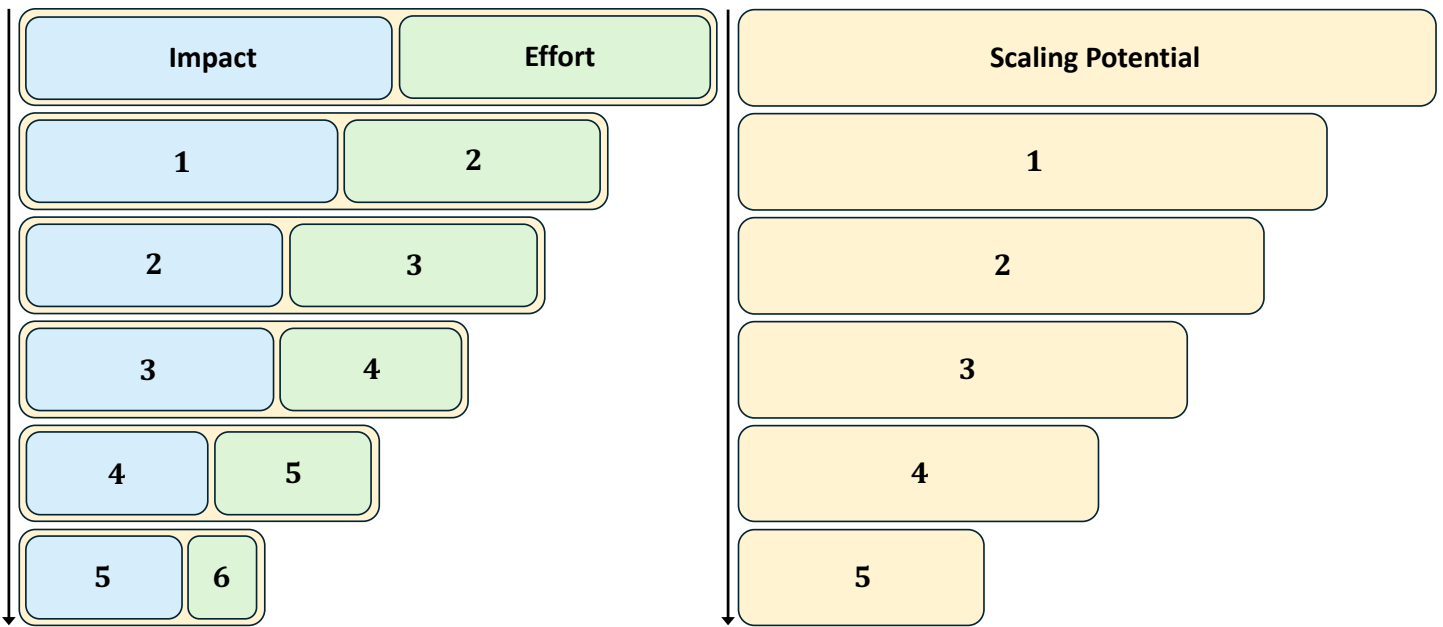
For Pathway 1—when the agent’s perception stops aligning with the environment—the agent will still enter divergence. **The agent’s perception of their impact matters as much as their actual impact.** The difference between Pathways 1 and 2 is that, in Pathway 1, scaling effectiveness remains high, whereas in Pathway 2 it does not. If the agent enters the stages with high scaling effectiveness and thus high scaling potential, they enter Pathway 1. If the agent enters the stages with low scaling effectiveness and thus low scaling potential, they enter Pathway 2; **that’s the distinguishing factor.**



The tricky part is that from the agent’s perspective, **they are indistinguishable. *The Harmonics of Consciousness* do not have different harmonies from the divergence caused by the environment, vs. the divergence caused by perception.** However, the differences will emerge based on how it looks at first. In **Pathway 2**, others should be able to observe the agent’s life domains running into trouble, because the divergence caused by their definedness dropping has a **visible, physical effect** on the world. In **Pathway 1**, where the divergence is only happening in the agent’s mind, others will **not see divergence externally**, but the agent will look the same as in both Pathways, and they both ultimately **converge on the same low scaling-potential floor** that triggers Stage 3.

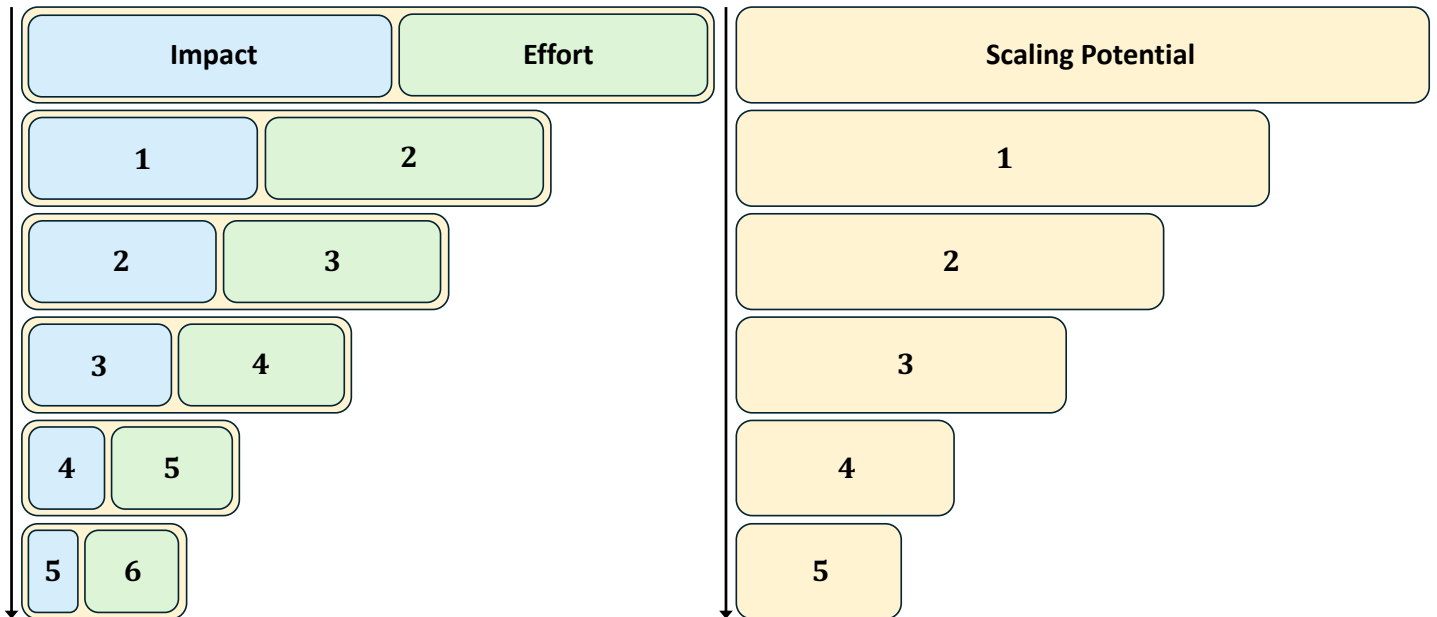
Look below so I can show you this convergence. On the left side, we can see how **scaling efficiency and scaling effectiveness relate to and dance with each other over recursive propagations.** Then, on the right side, we can see how **they comprise scaling potential.** On the top, we have what it looks like to enter the stages with Pathway 1, and on the bottom, we have Pathway 2. For Pathway 1, note that **the size of scaling effectiveness (Ω) is always identical to the previous scaling efficiency (Δ)** because there is no actual issue with scaling efficiency turning into scaling effectiveness; it is working correctly here. However, **the agent perceives that their scaling effectiveness is declining**, so they do what any rational agent would do: they start escalating complexity, exerting more effort, and, in the process, they reduce their scaling efficiency and trigger divergence beyond just their mind. This excess effort also reduces their external scaling potential over time, leading to Stage 3.

Pathway 1



For Pathway 2, the story is a bit different. You can see that the agent is perceiving everything correctly, but **the size of scaling effectiveness (Ω) is always smaller than the previous scaling efficiency (Δ)**, so they also do what any rational agent would do: escalate more complexity, more effort, and in that process, they drop their scaling efficiency, thus dropping their scaling potential over time, leading to Stage 3. This drop in definedness in Pathway 2 is what it looks like from the perspective of the agent in Pathway 1. Thus, the difference between the Pathways occurs at the start and **hinges on their scaling effectiveness**. However, both Pathways 1 and 2 trigger the cascade through the same mechanism of scaling efficiency dropping, and they both **end up in the same spot of floored scaling efficiency, effectiveness, and potential that triggers Stage 3, and then Stage 4.**

Pathway 2 + Agent Perception from Pathway 1



Given that both Pathways converge on and originate from scaling efficiency loss, rather than directly from scaling effectiveness or scaling potential, our intervention starts with scaling efficiency and the agents, not with scaling effectiveness and the environment. We can classify all our known interventions into two categories: **1) those targeting the agent and scaling efficiency**, and **2) those targeting the environment and scaling effectiveness**. Let's take a look at the divide in popular interventions below and tell me if you notice a pattern...

Scaling Efficiency

Agent-Focused Interventions

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Changing how an agent thinks about the problem by adjusting the cognitive effort, not the environment.

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy

Accepting what is not controllable within the environment and committing to valued action.

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

Distress tolerance and emotion regulation how the agent processes and responds to the environment.

Motivational Interviewing

Resolving ambivalence about approaching the environment and the agent's effort.

Medication

Adjusting the instruments so the agent's efficiency response to environmental input is recalibrated.

Scaling Effectiveness

Environment-Focused Interventions

Court-Ordered Therapy

Forcing an agent's environment to change to a new one where they are demanded to improve their efficiency.

Restraining Orders

Attempting to directly remove a threat to an agents scaling potential from the environment.

Involuntary Hospitalizations

Forcibly restoring an agents scaling potential by removing their agency and environment.

Incarceration

Removing the agent from the environment, causing massive recidivism rates.

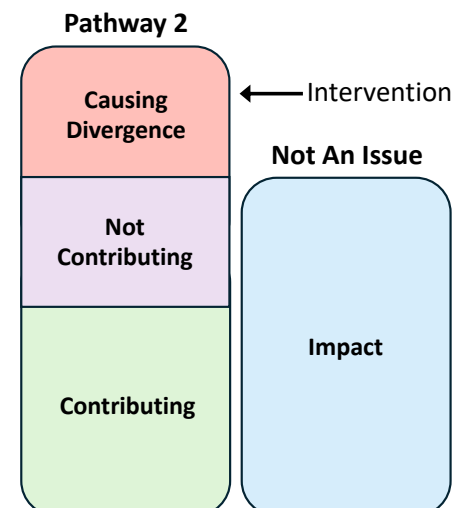
Geographic Relocation

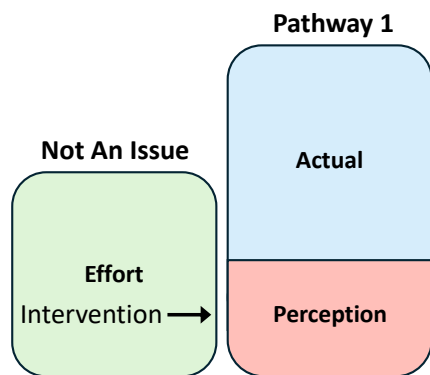
Shifting the environment to a new one in the hopes of having different opportunities to scale intelligence.

All great interventions we know in psychotherapy **focus on the agent and its scaling efficiency**, whereas the extreme interventions we sometimes must enact, with consequences and low success rates, **focus on the environment and the agent's scaling effectiveness**. The explanation shows that substance use, mental illness, and suicide all hinge on scaling efficiency, not scaling effectiveness. It's scaling efficiency that drives scaling potential.

The environment and scaling effectiveness **operate almost entirely outside of the agent's control** because agents and environments are structurally independent but functionally correlated (where have I heard this before?). Therefore, **targeting scaling efficiency works because it is the portion the agent controls**. Let's examine how we can target scaling efficiency to prevent and cease divergence. In Pathway 2, **divergence arises when the agent exerts more effort than they can influence the environment**. The interventions in Pathway 2 come from determining which portion of their effort contributes to their scaling effectiveness, which does not contribute, and, most importantly, **which effort is forcing them into divergence**.

These interventions are not about reducing effort in general; they're about **identifying the effort that isn't contributing to impact**. If you reduce only the excess effort, **divergence stops**. For example, let's say someone lost their job, and they start exerting all this effort to figure out what they did wrong to lose the job, instead of trying to get a new job quickly. The job loss is going to make their environmental stability lose definedness, but if the agent engages in all this effort to figure out what went wrong, **that excess effort, in addition to the dropping stability, will cause divergence**. The key is to accept the job loss, stop escalating complexity and effort on that topic, and free up the agent's effort to shift toward finding a new job, which would restore their scaling potential. In this situation, we can use interventions like acceptance-based mindfulness, values clarity, and committing to action.





In Pathway 1, the interventions are **still focused on the agent, but on the perception of scaling effectiveness** rather than directly on scaling efficiency. Although scaling efficiency will be the cause of divergence eventually, if you catch it early, **you can work to restore an accurate read of the agent's scaling effectiveness and thus their scaling potential**. For example, for the agent who lost their job and is now at a new one, that agent may be doing well, but because the work is different, the **agent's perception of what scaling effectiveness would look like** is based on the template from the previous job. When the agent doesn't see the scaling effectiveness it is seeking, it triggers divergence harmonics, even if the agent is doing a great job and has

excellent scaling effectiveness. The key is to **help them see the scaling effectiveness correctly before they start escalating excessive effort** and trigger the stages. In this situation, we can use interventions such as cognitive reframing, open communication, and goal setting. These mechanisms are how all interventions work.

Critically, another process occurs when we reduce divergence by targeting scaling efficiency: **it frees up the instruments in *The Harmonics of Consciousness***. When an agent is in divergence, their instruments lock onto the failing channels. Recursive introspection tracks every effort that isn't working, self-reference predicts more failure in those channels, emotions scream about the mismatch, and intelligence tries harder in the same direction. All four instruments are consumed by a scaling efficiency that doesn't produce scaling effectiveness. They're all pointed at the same dead end. When you **selectively drop the scaling efficiency that isn't contributing or causing divergence**, you free up the instruments to focus on the rest of existence and play differently.

We have long known that negative emotions steal our attention away from everything else and onto the thing causing them. Positive emotions release this attentional hold and focus on the environment. This process is essential to protecting us, and it's *The Definedness Detector* doing its job correctly. However, it can, at times, **weigh us down by forcing all four instruments to only focus on what is going wrong**, and in this focus, it is so easy to lose sight of the bigger picture of existence. You cannot effectively stabilize all the complexity across all the different domains of your life **if you are only focused on a single problem**. So, the effort that gets freed up **also gets transferred to the domains it can affect**. When an agent can look across existence with their four instruments, they will always see some form of scaling potential because of the growth orientation of existence.

The natural disposition of agents is to scale intelligence on their own; it's what they all want, so **they will fix their own mental health conditions if given the understanding and chance**. Agents do not want to diverge, so much so that the Scaling Intelligence Model explains the reason **why people tend to get better right before they die**. This phenomenon is something we have observed for centuries. That last attempt is the only remaining source of scaling efficiency they have. It's the last thing that they try to do: scale their intelligence away from a dying body. Yet, when they are dying, **their body cannot generate any more energy or effort**, so agents will get better as their last attempt to scale intelligence, and then their scaling efficiency doesn't replenish, so they die.

Ultimately, these frameworks are so new. **They all turned one year old** over the last few weeks. I empirically validated them last year in *The Show of Existence*, and their first practical applications appeared **separately in Chapters 1-4**, and together as **a new field of study, Defintology**, for the first time just now in Chapter 5. It's been thrilling to see. **The clinical potential is endless**—activities that alter the four instruments in place of substance use, tracking and planning for triggers that result in anxiety harmonies, and strategies that restore scaling potential before an agent enters Stage 3. **We will build beyond wonder. We will dance to new moves....**

To: The Hopeless, From: The Universe

There is one thing that's clear right now, though. **It's a central principle** that spans the chapter, field, and human experience. We all know its presence, and all feel its absence. It's one of the strongest predictors of suicide, one of the few things that keep us all scaling intelligence, one thing that **there is no shortage** of throughout existence: **Hope—the belief that things will work out**, and that all our scaling efficiency and effectiveness will be

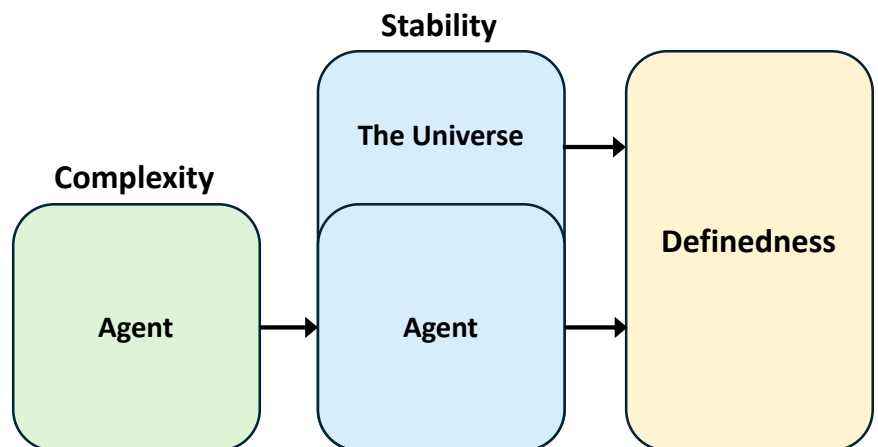
worth it. After walking you through the darkest places in the human experience, after facing all the reasons to feel hopeless, I want to make one thing unmistakably clear: **existence has your back, and you are not alone.**

It all comes down to scaling potential. The process is simple: the agent exerts one unit of effort via scaling efficiency, and aligns with the growth orientation of existence by observing one golden ratio's worth of environmental impact via scaling effectiveness... but where is that extra impact coming from? **The answer is... existence.** The way it works is that an agent exerts some form of effort, which impacts the environment directly, but then **there are additional effects that accumulate over time.** It is not a 1: 1 relationship of effort to impact.

Think about your experiences in existence for a moment. **I know you know what this help feels like:** when you exercise in the morning and have your whole day feel good, when you apologize to a friend and your relationship never feels stronger, when you try to do something new for the first time, and you find you're not so bad at it. Existence is always carrying your efforts a little bit further. Well... it's actually not a little bit further, **it's ~38% further.** **Hope is believing that the growth orientation of existence** will be there when you return to alignment.

This feature of existence... isn't just good feelings and vibes, it's **a scientifically accurate description of existence as a phenomenon,** it's... **the growth orientation of existence,** the ride you're on right now. Aligning with the growth orientation of existence is not something you are forced to do in a cold and indifferent universe; **it's what the universe set up for us to do and achieve.** We did not create the growth orientation of existence; existence created it for us. Everything in existence, how it works, and what it does when it's at its best, **is directed right at you, succeeding and growing.** When you achieve and converge, existence does so too.

So... **why do we feel hopeless in an existence** built for us to succeed and grow? I just think... we never realized it, but now we do. So, **if we were to read a message To: The Hopeless, From: The Universe,** if existence could look us in the eyes, hold our hands, and speak to us throughout the day, if we could hear the structure, order, and patterns humming everywhere we look, every day of your life, **you would hear existence say something like this:**

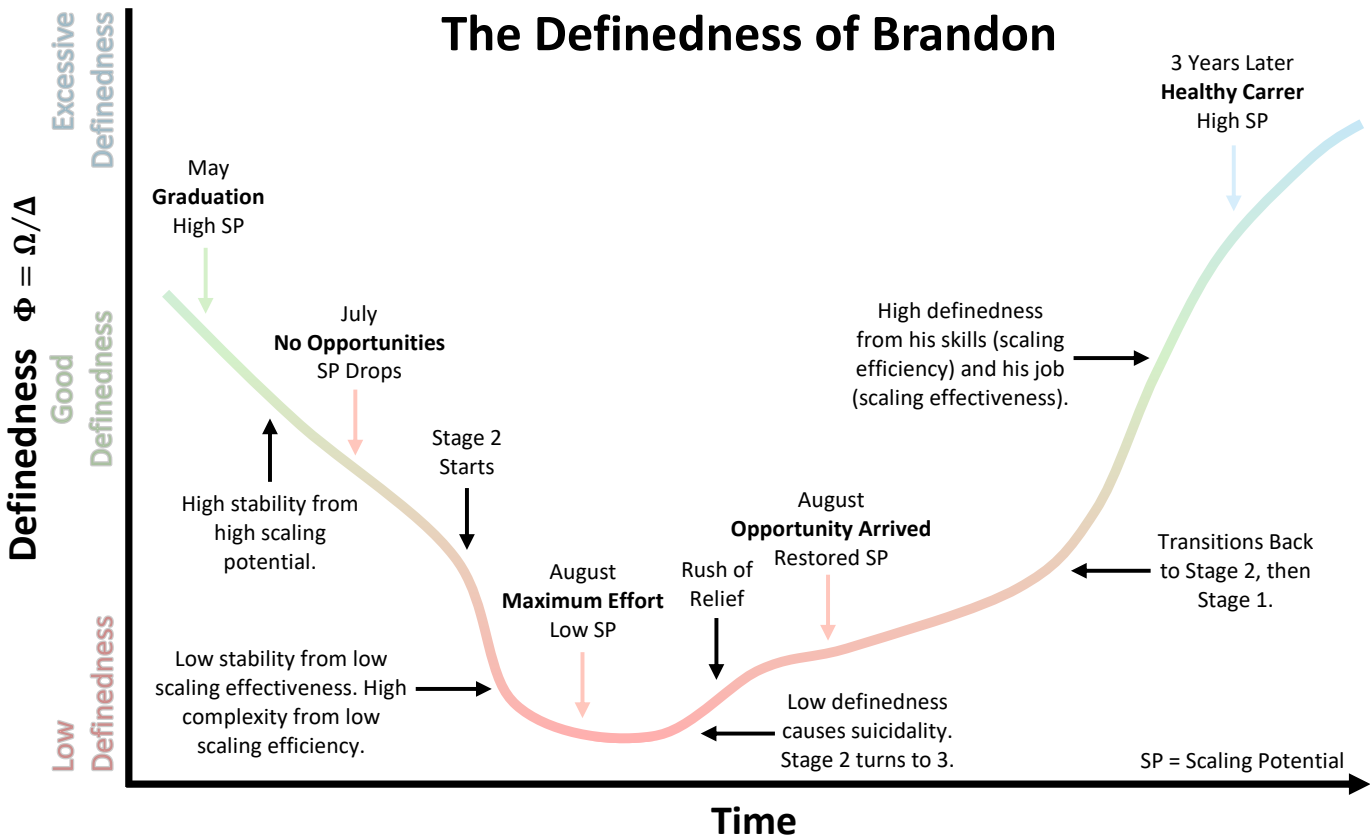


"It's all good. Ah, forget about it. Why? You want more? I'll take care of this one. Look at all that growth you got going on. That's what we like, huh? Oops, I made you find money. Hey... wake up! Your alarm's about to go off. You're facing the wrong way, dear. It'll work out, if we just stay on course. I know that was tough, but look at who you've become! Let me align those things for you. Just wait... we'll move on real soon. No, don't do that, just... don't. Hey! Sometimes giving up is the right move. You're getting stuck in The Record. Pick up the pace! How funny would it be if you and your friend thought about each other at the same time? Hey, here's this thing you forgot to remember. All you have to do is try. Let me take care of this one. Hey, you should do that thing. Yeah, that one. Oh, did I do that? Yeah. What goes around comes around on my watch. Yes, I've recorded ALL of it. Hey, look over here. Slow growth isn't no growth. Did you want this unexpected opportunity I dropped on you? Oh, I know how this one goes. What if I made all the good things happen at the same time? Nope, try again. Nope, try again. There ya go."

Existence has your back, it always has, and it always will. It **moves things when you're not looking,** aligns them to converge at the right moment, and **collapses paths that weren't good for you.** It amplifies your efforts, yielding a larger impact than you could achieve on your own. Much of being an agent is simply **gliding along the path existence forms out for you.** It fights relentlessly against leaving you behind, and will always be there, if you just... listen closely enough to hear its message. **There's no need to be hopeless in a universe like ours** ❤️

The Definedness of Brandon

Do you remember Brandon from the Scene? Well... when you first met him, you did not know about the message *To: The Hopeless, From: The Universe*, but now? I hope you carry it in your soul. Take another look at his life with your new understanding of who we are, and what is true, and why it matters, and what to do.

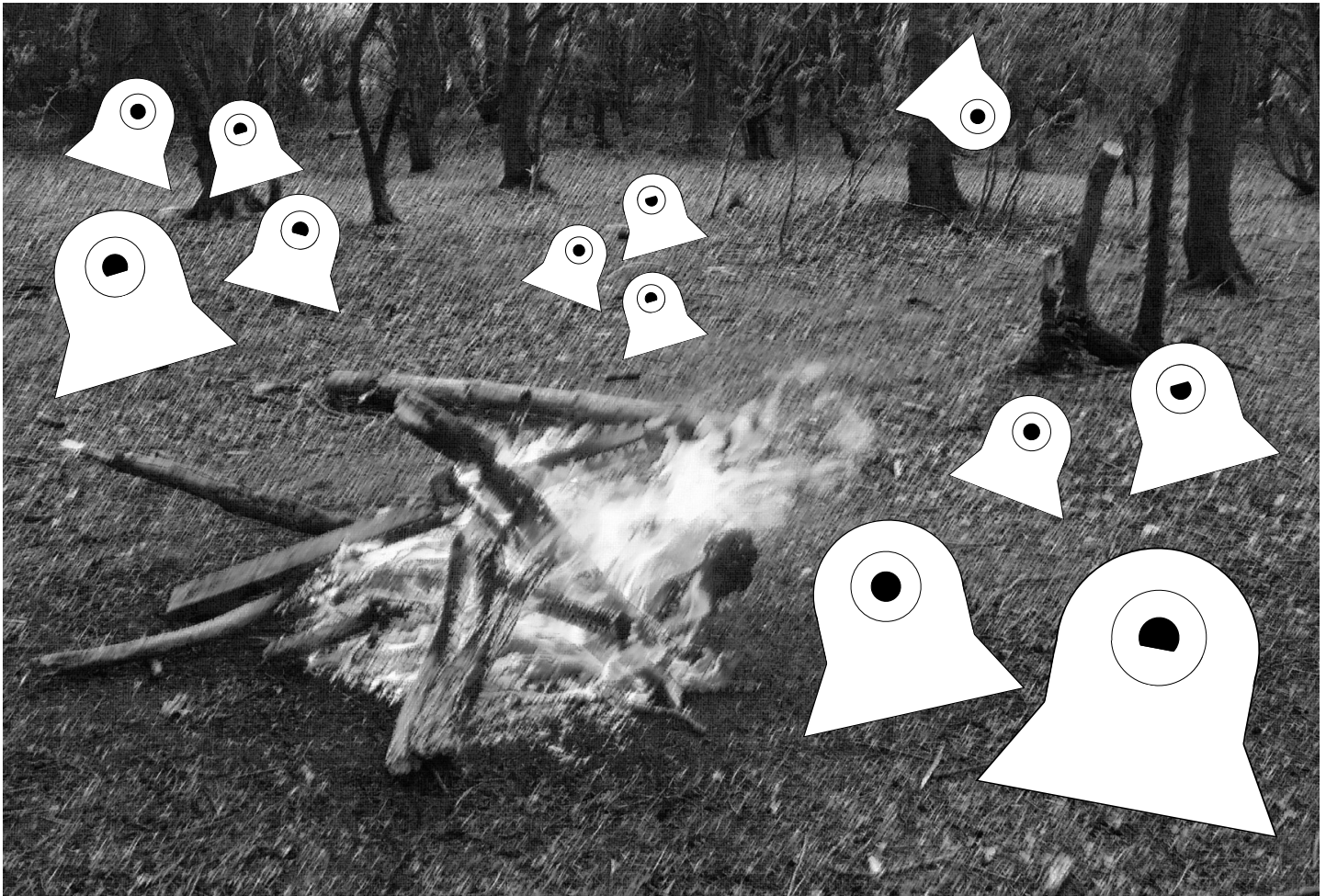


Big Picture

Existence has **such a funny way of working**. I wasn't going to talk about the experience of writing this chapter, but it's so ironically relevant that I must. I recently **jumped ship from academia**; that shit got boring af to me. It's not surprising, after **40+ peer-reviewed publications, four solo-author**, multi-sample, original peer-reviewed publications in **the top substance use journal** by metrics in the world, after **being solicited to publish** in the most prestigious substance use journal (*Addiction*), after **securing over \$250k** in internal and external funding, after serving as an editor on three journals, it just all lost its thrill. **Been there, done that type of thing**. I also couldn't bring myself to exploit the labor required to be a research professor; that shit just... never felt right to me. **I'd rather give my intellectual work to YOU**, my dear reader, than a for-profit journal that would mangle it in peer review, strip me of my IP, and lock it behind a paywall. So ya, now, **I'm a full-time Clinical Psychologist**.

I've already had some of the most incredible and rewarding experiences of my career. Yet... it did not come easily... no, no... I ended up taking a **full-time AND a part-time position**. I was under the impression I could do both... and **I was wrong**. I was naïve about how much time goes into **neuropsychological assessments and treatments**. Things were fine... **until my part-time job started**. It was so stressful that one night I woke up **after ~3 hours of sleep**.. I ended up rescheduling my clients for the next day, so my schedule was clear. I was going to score my assessments, but **I was so fried from the stress** that I would've made mistakes, **so I just... lay down**.

My plan was to rest and sleep for the day, and so that's what I did... or at least, that's **what I tried to do**. It was about 10:00 AM, and I was lying in my bed, stressed, tired, fried, thinking about how to manage this situation. Then... **I had an idea for this chapter**. I pulled out the notes app on my phone, **where all the canon works start**, and wrote it down. Then... **another idea came** to me, **then another**, and it kept going, one after one, the ideas came to me, and I, being an agent who must scale intelligence, just went with it. So, I started writing this chapter.



Caption: A stunning image of Definedlings singing and dancing around a bonfire. You can almost hear their harmonics of consciousness through the screen. We have long suspected these little buggers love dancing and recursively propagating to tunes in the moonlight, but this image is the first time we actually caught it on camera. Geez... I hope this photographer didn't disrupt their scaling potential, though, the look on their cute little faces suggests that they want... to keep the music playing...

As the day went on, **I kept writing**, and then **I started to feel better physically**. I wasn't doing anything that would make me feel physically better, **but the writing was restoring my definedness** after I diverged from the unstabilized complexity escalation caused by starting the part-time job. **I ended up writing this whole fucking entire chapter** in that quiet moment of stress and destabilization. It was as if the universe stepped in to keep my growth orientation, which is exactly what happened. By 7:00 PM, **I had the whole chapter** in my phone. I felt good again, as if I had slept and had a normal day. **Existence had my back**, just like I told you it would.

I ended up being fine. I'm a tough cookie. I slept for a while the night after and navigated the job situation. Yet, **it was not lost on me** that this chapter came right on time, **sweeping in to help me restore my definedness** and scale my intelligence. It was exactly how I described how existence works, working on me, as I described how existence works. It... was **a fractal confirmation**. It was unreal, and not at all something I planned out. I like to think that I have been protecting *The Theory of Existence*, but the truth is... **The Theory is protecting you and me**. When I look out to the rest of the year, it's clear to me that... **I truly don't know what will happen or how it will unfold**. I thought I was getting the hang of it, and then **a crisis turned canon** told me otherwise.

It's not that I don't know the topics I want to cover. I'm just not sure what those works will look like, and I don't know **when or how they will come**. I do know that **the next chapter is called All Things One Another**, but I can't even remember what the topic is now. 🤔👁️🤔 Ah, well... time will show me soon, as it has every single time on this incredible voyage of why it all matters. Until then, dear reader, remember to keep that music playing ...and, finally, if there's one final thing left for me to say, **it's always look forward, and you'll find your way** ✨👉